



Kentucky Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary

Testimony of Ali Mock, Director of Government Relations & Jarrod Carnahan, Vice President of Government & Victim Services

Equifax, Providers of Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE)

July 18, 2024

Chair Westerfield, Chair Elliott, and Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ali Mock and I am the Government Relations Director for Equifax with a focus on our Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) service. I am joined today by Jarrod Carnahan, who is our Vice President of Government and Victim Services.

Equifax acquired Louisville based Appriss Insights, LLC on October 1, 2021, and proudly retained our presence and workforce here in Kentucky. Our mission is to help government agencies in victim services, law enforcement and social services make better-informed decisions for early responses to people-driven risks. VINE plays a crucial role in Equifax's purpose of helping people live their best lives. VINE stands as a cornerstone mission at Equifax, dedicated to empowering individuals and communities through timely and critical information. We help victims and their families become safer and more informed through timely offender release, court case, and protective order notifications. Equifax is committed not only to sustain the success VINE has achieved, but to invest in VINE to expand its reach and enhance the service for victims and everyone affected by crime.

VINE was founded in 1994 in response to the murder of a young Louisville woman, Mary Byron. After being incarcerated for raping, assaulting, and stalking Mary, her assailant was released but she was never informed, despite requests from her family. On Mary's 21st birthday, her assailant approached her with a gun and fired shots at close range, killing her instantly. Automation plays a crucial role in VINE's effectiveness, especially against human error, like in Mary's case. VINE has grown to be the nation's leader in victim notification and we are the largest notification platform with relationships in 46 states. The service is available through phone, text, in-app notifications, and TTY for the hearing impaired, and it is tirelessly supported by live operators 24/7. VINE additionally connects victims/survivors to local and state resources through a service provider directory.

VINE has made a profound contribution to the safety of victims in Kentucky in partnership with the Justice Cabinet and the Department of Corrections. In 2023 alone, Kentucky VINE facilitated over 679,000 custody and incarceration status notifications, individuals conducted 1,200,000 searches, and over 208,000 people registered for notifications. In addition to VINE, the VINE Protective Order ("VPO") service delivered nearly 60,000 notifications, further enhancing safety measures for those impacted citizens. Across the United States we have delivered more than 800 million notifications, and over 20 million victims of crime and concerned citizens use VINE to stay safe and informed.

You are likely aware of the Joint Committee on Judiciary's hearing in September of 2023. A clear outcome of that hearing was that lawmakers, prosecutors, and victims share a common desire to reestablish robust automated court

notification in Kentucky. Currently, Kentucky VINE provides custody and incarceration status notifications along with protective order notifications, however, additional notifications could be provided with the adoption of VINE Courts. To that end, after the September hearing, we worked alongside the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to find mutual understanding as to what a robust VINE Courts would look like from a data integrity and implementation perspective, and to do so as cost effectively as possible. My colleague Jarrod Carnahan will briefly identify some of the stated tension points that prior AOC leadership articulated and how Equifax intends to resolve them.

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee. My name is Jarrod Carnahan, Vice President of Government & Victim Services for VINE. I have lived in Kentucky my entire life and am a constituent of the 36th Senate District and 31st House District in Eastern Jefferson County. As a lifelong citizen, I am proud to now lead the VINE team and contribute to a safer Kentucky. It is fundamentally my job and number one priority that VINE works and works well, and I can confirm that the Kentucky VINE system is operating as it is intended. I appreciate the opportunity to stand before you.

Equifax continuously invests in technological advancements and operational improvements to better serve victims of crime and concerned citizens. We expanded our offerings to include court notifications, a service we call VINE Courts, and that product was utilized by Kentucky until 2021. In an effort to restore the service, we brought in engineering, legal, and technical expertise and worked to solve requests that were specific to Kentucky's AOC.

As you can understand, VINE relies on comprehensive data from the state to provide timely and accurate notifications. Data elements often include case numbers, court dates, event types, courtroom locations, and defendant identification information. Kentucky's AOC sought a more specific approach for selecting the data elements sent to VINE, and we collaborated to define a suitable method while upholding system integrity.

Our second discussion point as it relates to the data is the receipt of all court cases and their supporting data elements to be searchable in VINE. Typically, a state transmits all court cases to VINE so that victims/survivors, those in a support role, and concerned citizens may search for and register against a case to receive timely notification on hearing updates and statuses. The AOC has expressed a preference to forward only those cases they have determined to have an identifiable victim and we are able to meet that preference.

Addressing concerns regarding data privacy and usage, I want to emphatically and unequivocally reiterate that our organization does not retain search history or engage in any unauthorized use of registrant or victim information. The *only* use of registrant data is in the instance we are legally required to provide it or if it is within the provisions of the VINE service.

In closing, we strongly believe that through partnership with the AOC that Kentucky's citizens would have the seamless and complete automated notification system that they expect through VINE. We are grateful for the support of this Committee and seek to continue partnership to advance a safer and more informed Commonwealth. We appreciate your time today and would be pleased to take any questions.