



Testimony on H.B. 49: Main Operating Budget for FY 2018-2019

House Finance Committee

Rosa Beltre, Interim Executive Director

Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence

April 5, 2017

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 49. As Ohio's statewide coalition, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

I'm here today to ask for your continued support for Ohio's rape crisis centers. Many victims of sexual violence in Ohio still reside in counties without a rape crisis center, and must travel long distances to get to the nearest center or even the closest hospital with a trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. For many victims, this means they never make that journey and suffer in silence, dealing with the pain on their own; sometimes self-medicating; sometimes repeatedly missing work or dropping out of school entirely; sometimes having multiple visits to healthcare facilities over their lifespan to deal with chronic health issues, all brought on by the victimization of rape.

Ohio has made incredible strides in its support of victims of sexual assault within the past four years. For the first time ever, the state established dedicated funding through the Rape Crisis Centers Fund (RCCF) at \$1 million per fiscal year in the state budget in the 130th General Assembly. House Bill 64 built on this foundation of support by increasing the RCCF to \$1.5 million per fiscal year. **We ask that the legislature continue its support of funding for victims of sexual assault by increasing the RCCF to \$2 million per fiscal year.**

Approximately 743,000 adult women living in Ohio are survivors of rape,¹ and one in four girls and one in six boys being sexually abused before they turn 18 years old². Progress has been made to expand availability of vital services for victims in recent years:

- Only **42** counties received RCCF funded services in FY '14
- **51** counties received RCCF funded services in '15
- Today, **28** rape crisis centers provide life saving services to **77** counties with the support of the RCCF.

While gaps remain in 11 counties without comprehensive rape crisis services, this funding has resulted in more than 14,000 Ohioans receiving critical services that they would not have otherwise.

¹ *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. (2010). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I.A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics and risk factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 14, 19-28. Doi:10.1016/0145-2134(90)90077-7

Our plan for Ohio is to continue expanding the availability of rape crisis services in counties without such services, while sustaining and growing existing services.

We are extremely grateful for the legislative support that has been offered to rape crisis centers in recent years. Due to continued need for these services, we are hopeful that you can build on the support that you have already provided. The bill, in its current form, dedicates \$1.5 million for each year of the upcoming biennium for rape crisis centers. **We ask for your support to increase the fund to \$2 million per fiscal year.** The increased funding would help ensure that we can continue to expand the number of victims who are provided services. Additionally, an increase in funding would allow us to substantially increase prevention efforts statewide.

We have much work ahead of us to ensure that regardless of which county you reside in in Ohio, you have access to comprehensive rape crisis services. While federal grants fluctuate from year to year, with countless restrictions on federal funding on essential costs that non-profits need just to keep their doors open; and grants like VOCA not funding prevention and requiring a 20-25% match just to receive the other 75-80% of funds, it's no small feat that Ohio's rape crisis centers have remained open over the years.

We are incredibly thankful for the Rape Crisis Fund. It has literally kept the doors open of some of Ohio's rape crisis centers and provided such critical funding to programs to support survivors in their communities and to increase prevention to stop rape from happening in the first place. Thank you for your consideration of this request.