



**Proponent testimony submitted to the
Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
House Bill 166
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Chair Carfagna, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 166. As Ohio's statewide coalition, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

Established in 2014, the Rape Crisis Centers line item was created to address the deficit of rape crisis services for victims of sexual assault in Ohio. Prior to creation of the Rape Crisis Center Line Item, Ohioans in just 42 counties had access to rape crisis centers. Recognizing this disparity, OAESV worked closely with the Ohio Attorney General and numerous legislators to research and better understand the constraints preventing the expansion of services to additional counties. The qualitative data demonstrated that rape crisis centers were not able to apply for federal grant amounts sufficient to expand services into adjacent counties because their operations were unable to meet local match requirements. A non-restrictive state funding stream was agreed upon as the appropriate strategy to achieve expansion. The impact was swift and powerful – in the first-year of distribution, counties receiving services jumped to 51, and incrementally increased to 75 before growth stalled with the lack of a line item increase in 2017.

Today, survivors in Clermont, Coshocton, Erie, Fayette, Green, Henry, Huron, Jackson, Lawrence, Miami, Pike, Ross, and Williams counties do not have access to a rape crisis center.

Survivors in these 13 counties must have access to services to address the magnitude of emotional, physical, and financial harm that impacts both individuals and Ohio communities as a whole. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the estimated lifetime cost of rape is \$122,500 per victim, or a population economic burden of nearly \$3.1 trillion over victims' lifetimes based on data indicating roughly 25 million U.S. adults have been sexually assaulted. This includes medical costs, lost work productivity for victims and perpetrators, and criminal justice activities.

Rape crisis centers have experienced a 27% increase in the number of survivors served since the last increase to the Line Item. This has been especially difficult for rural programs, whose increases have been as high as 100% in that same period, without a corresponding funding increase to increase staff to meet the need.

We respectfully ask this Subcommittee to increase the Rape Crisis Line item to \$3 million per fiscal year, allowing centers to more adequately address these needs, and reduce the staggering financial impact on Ohio citizens and communities. This number is not arbitrary - \$3 million would allow up to \$33,000 per county for services, providing salaries for additional advocacy in unserved counties and to meet the escalating demand for services in counties with existing programs.

As funding increases to expedite rape kit processing, more and more victims will find themselves involved in the criminal justice process after months or years of waiting. It is vital that these individuals have access to rape crisis services, a feat that cannot be accomplished without a corresponding increase to the Rape Crisis Centers Line Item.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask for your support of an increase to the Rape Crisis Center fund to \$3 million per fiscal year.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.