



**Proponent testimony submitted to the
Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee
House Bill 166
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Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
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Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, 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 31 rape crisis programs extend their home county borders to provide services to survivors in 75 counties. While we have seen much greater availability of services since the line item was established, survivors in Clermont, Coshocton, Erie, Fayette, Green, Henry, Huron, Jackson, Lawrence, Miami, Pike, Ross, and Williams counties still lack access to a rape crisis center. They will continue to lack access until the rape crisis centers line item increases, allowing existing rape crisis programs to further expand into adjacent counties lacking services.

Every single survivor in Ohio 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 urge this Committee and the Ohio Senate to support the increase proposed by the House, bringing the Rape Crisis Center Line item to \$4.45 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 - \$4.45 million would allow up to \$45,000 per county for services, providing salaries and ancillary costs for additional advocacy in unserved counties and to meet the escalating demand¹ 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 \$4.45 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.

¹ Though the number of survivors served statewide has increased 27% since 2015, in many rural counties, the reality is much more severe. In Warren County, for example, ARCS Shelter has experienced an increase of over 100% since 2015.