

Testimony for Public Hearing  
General Government sub-committee

May 18, 2017

Lillian Howard

547 Lamesa Drive

Blacklick, OH 43004

Good morning Chairman Jordan, VC O'Brien, and members of the Finance General Government and Agency Review Subcommittee. My name is Lillian Howard and I am the Clinical Supervisor at CHOICES. At CHOICES, we provide 24-hour crisis information, a referral hotline, temporary shelter, counseling and support groups, legal and community advocacy, and education and training programs.

CHOICES has been providing domestic violence services for 30 years. The hotline staff took 4,792 calls with an average call time of 9.58 minutes. There were 4,399 female callers, 179 males, 8 transgender, and 206 unknown callers. In addition to English callers' languages included ASL, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Mandarin, Napoli, Persian, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Our shelter services housed 701 individuals during calendar year 2016 and offered support and comfort to 356 adults and 345 children. Nine of the adults were men. Languages used in the shelter included ASL, Amharic, French, Napoli, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese. Our relationship with the Columbus Police Department and several of the suburban communities around Franklin County has allowed CHOICES the opportunity to engage with women and men whose abuser has threatened to kill them. CHOICES received 1,716 high danger calls from the police last year.

Seventy four percent of those callers spoke to a hotline worker. Five hundred and thirty eight callers scheduled to meet with one of the community advocates for safety planning, education and access to community resources.

I am here today asking you to support a line item in the state budget for Domestic Violence services. While numerous states offer direct line item support for domestic violence programs, Ohio has fallen behind in helping this vulnerable population get, and stay on, its feet. While I understand the Senate has some tough choices to make, I ask that you retain line item 055602. This line item is \$100,000 per FY and will benefit domestic violence programs throughout the state.

Many victims of domestic violence flee with little resources. Our task as a Domestic Violence provider is to provide advocacy, education, safety planning, and assist victims in reclaiming their power to provide for themselves and their children. However due to lack of funding victims have a long and difficult path to financial freedom and stability. Barriers such as language, family size, poor rental history, and limited employment skills can impede a victim's ability to take care of themselves and their children.

Therefore, I am asking you to support this line item in the state budget that will help domestic violence victims and go a long way in connecting them to the community resources needed to build stability in their lives. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.