

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, December 12, 2017
Proponent Testimony
House Bill 1

Good morning, Committee Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

My name is Sarah Wolf-Knight, and I am the advocacy coordinator at YWCA Dayton. As you may know, YWCA Dayton serves Montgomery and Preble counties as both counties' only domestic violence shelter. Our skilled clinical team and crisis support specialists offer an array of services to women and children impacted by violence, including case management, housing support, and a 24-hour hotline. YWCA Dayton shelter services offer a wide variety of programming to help women and children improve their personal safety, encourage self-sufficiency and empower women to survive, cope, and re-enter the community safely.

We've sheltered survivors of gender-based violence for more than 40 years, and it is time that Ohio's antiquated domestic violence statutes are updated to reflect today's social standards. The median age of first marriage for women has risen from around 20 in the 1950s to just over 27 today, according to a report from the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University¹. A report on marriages



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from the Centers for Disease Control stated that the percentage of women likely to be married for the first time by age 25 dropped from 59 percent in 1995 to 44 percent in 2010ⁱⁱ. Young women are getting married later, but this cohort – women between the ages of 18 and 24 – still experiences the highest rate of intimate partner violence in the nationⁱⁱⁱ. As people get married later in life, occurrences of dating violence will continue to rise, and we must ensure that women in dating relationships have access to legal protections and resources to end the cycle of violence.

Current Ohio law only recognizes domestic violence as violence occurring between spouses, those cohabiting, or certain family members. Ohio is one of only two states to not include protections for those in dating relationships in our state statutes. Expanding this category to those in dating relationships would document ongoing abusive behaviors, address intimate partner violence earlier in relationships, and expand resources for those who experience dating violence.

YWCA is on a mission to eliminate racism and empower women. While women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, and religious affiliations experience violence, women of color and other marginalized populations experience disproportionate incidents of gender-based violence, as well as



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increased barriers in seeking help. YWCA seeks to dismantle these barriers, and the passage of HB 1 would be a significant step towards providing common-sense legal protections to all victims of intimate-partner violence.

Protection orders legally prevent contact between a victim and perpetrator. They can also grant child custody and require the perpetrator to relinquish any firearms.

Protection orders work; they deter further violence and increase victim safety^{iv} and peace of mind. Therefore, they should be available to all victims of intimate partner violence, regardless of one's relationship to their abuser.

YWCA is dedicated to promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all, and in alignment with this mission, we urge the committee to support the passage of House Bill 1.

If you have any questions, or would like any additional information from us, please do not hesitate to contact YWCA Dayton at 937-461-5550.



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ⁱ <http://www.mydaytondailynews.com/news/millennials-waiting-longer-get-married/23GicvHJID0cRWh2kmcxJL/>

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ⁱⁱⁱ <https://ncadv.org/statistics>

^{iv} <https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/interventions/pages/protection-orders.aspx>



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