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Mary O'Doherty, Executive Director  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veteran's Affairs Committee  
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### **Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 429**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veteran's Affairs Committee, my name is Mary O'Doherty and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) represents 75 local domestic violence organizations across the state. Last year our programs served nearly than 84,500 survivors and their children. Those victims needed shelter (9,045) or help obtaining a protective order or support while they prosecuted their abusers. Many of them were looking for housing and other assistance as they worked to rebuild their lives after experiencing abuse.

ODVN appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony as the committee considers the amended House Bill 429. ODVN supports the bill provisions which address the applicability of the Safe at Home program for real property owners. This was a known issue that there was no good solution for until now. We fully support these changes and appreciate the concern and attention of Secretary of State LaRose to this issue.

ODVN further supports the provisions designed to allow for the optional release of information to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, school administrator, food pantry, or public benefits administrator. The protections regarding the redisclosure of protected information in these provisions also strengthen the program for participants.

ODVN also supports the protections for program participants involved in custody litigation provided for in HB 429. Without clear and comprehensive protections for litigants, no domestic violence survivor with minor children would be able to use Safe at Home as an option for part of a safety plan. Once the address and phone number are released in litigation, there is no protection for that participant and they are effectively discharged from the program as their information would be readily accessible by public record. The bill sets forth a procedure for courts to consider the safety implications of any release of protected information prior to making a determination in the case.

It is ODVN's position that this bill increases safety for real property owners and the current and future participants in the Safe at Home address confidentiality program. ODVN appreciates Secretary of State LaRose's efforts along with the bill sponsors, and other interested parties to preserve and increase safety for all domestic violence survivors and survivors of sex offenses and stalking by known assailants who participate in the Safe at Home program.