

# Vote **NO** on **HB 508**

## Protect the Best Interests of Children

April 4, 2022

Dear legislator –

Please join more than 80 legal, child and family-focused organizations across Ohio and oppose HB 508. (See page 2 for a complete list).

Child safety should be the first priority of custody adjudications. But HB 508, also known as the “equal-parenting” bill, shifts Ohio’s current child-centric model to a parent-entitlement model. Equal parenting-presumption legislation takes necessary discretion away from courts and will result in outcomes that are harmful to children and survivors of domestic violence.

Current law requires judges to focus on the “best interests” of the child. H.B. 508 mandates equal parenting responsibilities and equal parenting time unless there is clear and convincing evidence that it would be detrimental to the child. While the bill maintains the best interest factors, a court cannot even consider them until clear and convincing evidence of detriment to the child is proven. The [Ohio Judicial Conference](#) says this “double hurdle” would be insurmountable in most domestic violence or child abuse cases.

The vast majority of custody arrangements are settled out of court. The small percentage that must be adjudicated typically involve complex problems, including abuse. Research shows that about 90% of custody cases are resolved without significant court intervention (mediation, custody evaluations, litigation).<sup>1,2</sup> Among the 10% of cases that are litigated, **approximately 75% involve reports of domestic violence.**<sup>3</sup>

HB 508 would increase litigation because that is the only way victims can challenge the equal-parenting-time presumption. HB 508 would be especially harmful for low-income victims who often will not have the funds to challenge an equal-time mandate. Litigation abuse is a common tactic used by abusers because it is one of the few remaining ways they can control their victims after the family separates.

These costs and the extreme stress of fighting an abuser in court undermine the well being of parents and children. Oppose HB 508 and preserve judges’ discretion on a case-by-case basis to consider the best interest of children in custody cases.

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<sup>1</sup> Court Statistics Project. Caseload Detail: Dissolution/Divorce. Court Statistics Project, Available from <https://www.courtstatistics.org/csp-stat-nav-cards-second-row/csp-stat-domestic-relations>.

<sup>2</sup> Ollendick, White & White, The Oxford Handbook of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 499 (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Peter G. Jaffe, Claire V. Crooks & Samantha E. Poisson, Common Misconceptions in Addressing Domestic Violence in Child Custody Disputes, 54 JUV. & FAM. CT. J. 57, 60 (2003) (75% of cases filed include domestic violence allegations)

**Ohio Domestic Violence Network**  
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## Protect the Best Interests of Children

More than 80 organizations are opposed

### Statewide Organizations

Ohio Domestic Violence Association  
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Attorneys  
Ohio Hispanic Coalition  
Ohio NOW

National Association of Social Workers—Ohio Chapter  
Ohio State Bar Association  
Action Ohio Coalition for Battered Women  
Ohio NOW Education and Legal Fund

Ohio Judicial Conference  
Ohio Victim Witness Association  
Women's Public Policy Network

### Local and Regional Organizations

The Center for Family Safety and Healing / *Franklin Co.*  
LSS CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence / *Franklin Co.*  
Advocating Opportunity / *Lucas and Franklin Cos.*  
Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center—Battered Women's Shelter & Rape Crisis Center / *Summit and Medina Cos.*  
Family Crisis Network—Our Home / *Mercer Co.*  
YWCA of Van Wert County / *Van Wert Co.*  
Crisis Care Line / *Van Wert Co.*  
First Step / *Seneca and Sandusky Cos.*  
The Cocoon / *Wood Co.*  
Soteria House & New Directions of TNC / *Logan Co.*  
Southern Ohio Task Force on Domestic Violence / *Scioto Co.*  
Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program / *Athens, Meigs, Perry, Gallia, Hocking, Morgan, and Vinton Cos.*  
Sarah's Friends, Inc. / *Williams Co.*  
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy Inc./House of Ruth / *Henry and Defiance Cos.*  
SART Clinic of Northwest Ohio / *Fulton Co.*  
The Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc. / *Richland Co.*  
Women Helping Women / *Hamilton Co.*  
Homesafe Inc. / *Ashtabula Co.*  
Eve / *Washington Co.*  
WomenSafe / *Geauga Co.*  
Safe on Main / *Warren Co.*  
Someplace Safe / *Trumbull Co.*

Alliance Area Domestic Violence Shelter / *Stark Co.*  
COMPASS Family & Community Services, Sojourner House / *Mahoning Co.*  
Family Abuse Shelter of Miami Co. / *Miami Co.*  
Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland / *Cuyahoga Co.*  
Safer Futures / *Portage Co.*  
Genesis House / *Lorain Co.*  
New Directions / *Knox Co.*  
Domestic Violence Project, Inc. / *Stark Co.*  
YWCA Dayton / *Montgomery and Preble Cos.*  
Turning Point / *Marion, Delaware, Wyandot, Morrow, Crawford, and Union Cos.*  
Project Woman / *Clark, Champaign, and Madison Cos.*  
The Woodlands/The Center for New Beginnings / *Licking Co.*  
Asian Services in Action / *Summit and Cuyahoga Cos.*  
Tri-County Help Center / *Monroe, Belmont and Harrison Cos.*  
Transitions / *Muskingum Co.*  
New Choices / *Shelby Co.*  
YWCA of Northwest Ohio / *Lucas Co.*  
Forbes House / *Lake Co.*  
Journey Center for Safety & Healing / *Cleveland*  
Auglaize County Crisis Center, Inc. / *Auglaize Co.*  
YWCA Hamilton / *Butler Co.*  
Artemis Center / *Montgomery Co.*  
My Sister's Place / *Athens Co.*

Open Arms Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Center / *Hancock Co.*  
Ohio Guidestone / *Tuscarawas and Carroll Cos.*  
The Lighthouse Inc. / *Fairfield Co.*  
Crossroads Crisis Center / *Allen Co.*  
Bethany House / *Lucas Co.*  
Shepherd's House / *Vinton Co.*  
Crime Victim Services / *Allen and Putnam Cos.*  
Peace House / *Fayette Co.*  
YWCA Greater Cincinnati / *Hamilton, Clermont, Brown, and Adams Cos.*  
Haven House / *Pickaway Co.*  
Family Violence Prevention Center / *Greene Co.*  
Asian American Community Services / *Franklin Co.*  
Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center—Children's Advocacy Center / *Lucas Co.*  
Ross County Coalition Against Domestic Violence / *Ross Co.*  
ETSS / *Franklin Co.*  
A.L.I.V.E. / *Jefferson Co.*  
Christina House / *Columbiana Co.*  
OneEighty / *Wayne Co.*  
Shelter from Violence / *Darke Co.*  
Square One / *Gallia Co.*  
Safe Harbour Domestic Violence Shelter / *Erie Co.*  
Alternatives to Violence Center / *Highland and Clinton Cos.*  
ASHA-Ray of Hope / *Franklin Co.*  
Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence Safe Haven / *Ashland Co.*

### National Organizations

National Family Violence Law Center    Center for Judicial Excellence    Moms Fight Back    Battered Women's Justice Project

Updated 4/4/2022 and will continue to be updated as supporting organizations sign on. Email [maria@odvn.org](mailto:maria@odvn.org) for more information.