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OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE JEFF LaRe, CHAIR
H.B. 3 – Proponent Testimony MAY 20, 2021

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 3 (Aisha's Law), which would increase protections for domestic violence survivors across the state. I am Lisa McDuffie, President/CEO of the YWCA of Northwest Ohio, and member of the Ohio Council of YWCAs. We support HB3 and its favorable consideration by this Committee.

Sponsored by Representatives Boyd and Carruthers, Aisha's Law will prevent intimate-partner-violence-related homicide by providing a means for police and domestic violence advocates to assess a survivor's level of danger for future intimate partner violence following an incident, and refer survivors to resources such as crisis intervention and counseling, housing, and medical and legal support. The bill would also hold perpetrators accountable by prohibiting offenders from pleading down violent felonies to lesser charges if previously convicted for a violent felony.

A 2017 report from the CDC found that more than half of female homicide victims were killed in connection to intimate-partner violence — and in 10 percent of those cases, violence shortly before the killing might have provided an opportunity for intervention. When previous incidents of domestic violence exist, the risk of homicide is 20 times higher. The report found that approximately one in 10 victims of intimate-partner violence-related homicide experienced some form of violence in the month before their death.

A study conducted by *The Washington Post* of five major U.S. cities found that more than 1/3 of all men who killed a current or former intimate partner were publicly known to be a potential threat to their loved one ahead of the attack. 36 percent of the perpetrators in the study had a previous restraining order against them or had previously been convicted of domestic abuse or a violent crime.

Aisha's Law would: expand the definitions of aggravated murder and child endangering to include domestic violence situations; establish local domestic violence high-risk teams for handling incidents of domestic violence and protection order violations for high-risk victims, and require law enforcement officers to utilize a qualified lethality assessment screening tool to refer high-risk victims to a local response team. The lethality assessment is a questionnaire designed to identify high-risk domestic violence cases, comprised of 11 questions regarding the relational and abuse history of the offender. Aisha's Law would also make changes to evidentiary procedures in criminal cases involving domestic violence and in civil actions to recover damages based on an injury to person or property based on a criminal act of domestic violence. The YWCA of NWO is pleased to be an integral part of the implementation of Lucas County's DV-high risk team.

As the provider of the only domestic violence shelter in Lucas County for over 35 years, we are driven by a mission to eliminate racism and empower women, and

prioritizes supporting those women who are survivors of gender-based violence. YWCA of Northwest Ohio provides 24/7, year-round shelter and supportive services for all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other forms of intimate-partner and gender-based violence. In 2019, The YWCA of Northwest Ohio provided more than 14,000 nights of shelter to 206 victims and 164 children.

Working on the front lines with survivors of domestic violence, our shelter staff believes that the passage of Aisha's Law would be a life-saving measure for survivors. By implementing a lethality assessment similar to the one currently used in YW's shelters, the law would provide first responders with better information about the cycle of abuse and what resources they can provide to end the cycle. We too believe that if all victim providers from all disciplines is sharing the same information to survivor's they will be more comfortable interacting with law enforcement and we will experience better outcomes.

In alignment with our mission, our request is that you support the passage of House Bill 3 in support of our organization's service population and domestic violence survivors throughout the Toledo community. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.