



WRITTEN TESTIMONY (PROPONENT) OF SHANNON ISOM
OHIO COUNCIL OF YWCAs
BEFORE THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FINANCE COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT OELSLAGER, CHAIR
H.B.110
MARCH 11, 2021

Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee. I am Shannon Isom, President and CEO of YWCA Dayton and President of the Ohio Council of YWCAs. Our Council consists of 14 YWCA associations across the state that is committed to our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women.

I am here to provide proponent testimony in favor of an amendment to H.B. 110, which would earmark \$3.5 million to support specific programming which provides direct service delivery to women and children victimized by gender-based violence throughout Ohio, and to continue and expand community outreach through youth development and prevention programs. More specifically, the amendment would support YW programs that:

- Prevent domestic violence,
- Support victims of domestic violence,
- Provide trauma-informed services for survivors of domestic violence, and
- Support youth development and prevention programming by increasing outreach and development opportunities, especially those focused on social emotional learning and bullying prevention.

These services include emergency shelters, crisis hotline support, and non-residential services. YWCA's provide wraparound services that address gender-based violence, including trauma-informed support for survivors such as counseling, case management, substance abuse services, and prevention education that works to implement systemic solutions.

Let me share with you what one YWCA can do: in 2020, YWCA Dayton's domestic violence services sheltered 264 women and children; provided 22,654 nights of stay in shelter; answered 5,558 crisis calls; and provided more than 16,000 hours of advocacy, counseling, and crisis support. As we moved through the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for shelter increased, in part due to unprecedented levels of caller lethality. More than ever before – three times more, in fact – survivors calling our hotlines were in imminent life-threatening danger.

In 2020, YWCA Dayton's transitional housing programs – which are some of the only ones in the Miami Valley designed to serve survivors of intimate-partner violence – served 197 families.



In 2020, YWCA Dayton served 314 girls in 12 schools, providing social emotional learning and bullying prevention programs that build girls of strength, courage, and wisdom. In the first two months of 2021, we have served 289 girls.

Across Ohio, combined our associations reached more than 90,000 women, girls, and families last year. Our current sources of funding include federal and private entities and TANF funding provided to the Council of YWCA's so that we could meet ongoing needs of the communities and the vulnerable populations we serve. This was the first shared state funding ever received by the YWCA's.

The amendment we support for requested funds will increase our breadth, our reach, our impact. It will significantly strengthen our ability to serve more Ohioans in need, improve program quality, and increase the impact of those we serve, and it will do so at a time when need has never been greater. It will provide the state a statewide effort that understands the need for efficacy, outcomes, quality and standardization.

This past year's pandemic has uncovered an even higher demand for our services, and our associations have borne the costs of increased demands for shelter, increased calls to crisis hotlines, unprecedented demand on frontline essential workers, and unforeseen – but critical – sanitization and technology costs. Many of our associations continue to shelter and care for domestic violence victims in area hotels, due to the increased demand to mitigate COVID-19 spread.

Each year, the demand for services increase. Across the state, YW's are community-centered, racial justice and gender equity advocates, combaters of human-trafficking and stalking, economic developers, educators and tutors, health and wellness purveyors—all while championing civil rights, human rights, family rights, children's rights, and social justice.

Our programs are curriculum-based and outcome-oriented; we sustain active service partnerships and referral channels throughout our respective communities. The requested funds would be a line-item appropriation in TANF Block Grant funding, which will not cost the state any General Revenue Funds as it is an allocation of federal pass-through dollars; yet be concrete dollars with a full community return.

The Governor's proposed budget considers substantial resources that are devoted to areas in social services to protect the most vulnerable Ohioans in H.B.166. The amendment will improve the bill because it demonstrates a clear commitment to support programming in organizations – like the Ohio Council of YWCA's - that have, for centuries, not been fearful to be on the front lines. Our funding request is consistent with that priority for families and for Ohio.

Chair Oelslager, we urge the Committee to favorably consider the amendment request. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.