

Written Testimony (Proponent) Of Shana Smith  
Ohio Council Of YWCAs  
Before The Ohio House Of Representatives  
Finance Subcommittee On Health And Human Services  
Representative Bill Roemer, Chair  
H.B.110  
March 4, 2021

Chair Roemer, Ranking Member West, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 110.

My name is Shana Smith, Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Canton and member of the Ohio Council of YWCAs. The Ohio Council is comprised of 14 YWCA associations across the State with a common goal of Eliminating Racism and Empowering Women.

I am writing to provide proponent testimony in favor of an amendment to House Bill 110, which would earmark \$3.5 million to support specific programming in YWCA associations that provide direct services to women and children victimized by gender-based violence throughout the State, promote early education and care for children and families, and expand community outreach through youth development and prevention programs. More specifically, the amendment would support Council programs that:

- Prevent domestic violence,
- Support victims of domestic violence,
- Provide trauma-informed services for children, homeless populations, and survivors of domestic violence, and
- Deliver early childhood intervention and education services, and youth development opportunities through prevention programming.

To address the critical needs of the Stark County community, YWCA Canton reaches vulnerable populations through our Early Childhood Learning Center, which serves children six-weeks to 11 years of age, Emergency Homeless Shelter, and three permanent supportive housing sites. Over 50% of our participants, across all program areas, live below the poverty level and nearly 71% represent people of color.

YWCA Canton operates the largest homeless shelter for women and children in Stark County. In 2020, YWCA Canton provided 14,414 nights of service in our emergency shelter for 335 individuals, of whom 65 were children. Our residents are supported by compassionate case managers who work collaboratively

with our residents and community partners to develop individualized housing plans to ensure residents transition to permanent housing in 90 days or less.

The Ohio Council of YWCAs reached more than 90,000 women, girls, and family members last year through programming. Our current sources of funding include federal and private sources, including TANF funding from the state, in the last biennium, so that we could meet ongoing needs of the communities and the vulnerable populations we serve, which was helpful. However, the amendment to House Bill 110 that we support will increase our ability to serve more individuals in need, improve program quality and increase the impact of those we serve. This past year's pandemic has uncovered an even higher demand for our services, and our members have borne the costs of increased demands for shelter, calls to domestic violence hotlines, essential workers, and sanitization and technology costs among other expenses. At least one member has had to house domestic violence victims in area hotels due to the increased demand and to mitigate COVID-19 concerns.

Each year, demand for the services we provide grows, as our programming is much vaster than the areas for which we are seeking funding. Our major programs include subject matters that address early childhood, homelessness, human trafficking, and gender violence prevention, as well as women and girls' empowerment, economic development, leadership, family development (including teen family development), health and wellness, senior community service, and racial justice and civil rights.

Our programs are curriculum-based and outcome-centered, and we sustain active service partnerships and referral channels throughout our respective communities. In fact, YWCA associations collectively partner and collaborate with Homeless and Behavioral Health providers and over 45 school districts and alternative schools statewide for programming and after school care. Finally, we provide a variety of educational opportunities for youth as part of wrap-around services.

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.

The Governor's proposed budget is a great start considering substantial resources will be devoted to areas in social services to protect the most vulnerable Ohioans in House Bill 110. The amendment will improve the bill because it demonstrates a clear commitment to support programming in organizations, such as ours, that are on the front lines to address marginalized populations. We believe our funding request is consistent with that priority.

Chair Roemer, we urge the Subcommittee to favorably consider the amendment request.