



1DivineLine2Health

<https://1dl2h.org/>

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May 13, 2021

Attn: Matt Dolan, Chair & Members of the Finance Committee.

Sub. H.B. No. 110 Creates appropriations for FY 2022-2023 Health & Human Services

Thank you for this opportunity to be a voice piece for the most vulnerable people in our community who are homeless and struggling with substance abuse disorder and are mostly trafficked. They are women, their children, and transwomen lately men engaged in survival sex. I am here as the daughter of the Most-High God and as a Registered Nurse to address the public health crisis of poverty. My name is Esther Flores, a modern-day abolitionist who founded a small nonprofit over 6 years ago doing mighty work in the 4 corners of human and drug trafficking named 1DivineLine2Health (1DL2H). My gender pronoun is them for all who suffer from systemic oppression here and abroad. In January 1DL2H opened the first full-time Drop-In Center on the Hilltop in Franklin County tailored to trafficked women their children, and Transwomen. It has been both rewarding and challenging.

In the public health crisis, we see homeless individuals being criminalized for loitering, soliciting, petite theft, drug paraphernalia, prostitution, and mental health problems when they have no safe places to go. WE need to acknowledge INCARCERATION IS NOT REHABILITATION. Many have reported having more access to drugs and being assaulted in the jails and prisons. They live in abandon houses and buildings on the same streets they were handcuffed. Congregate settings like the infamous Vanburen Shelter have become a place for people from all walks of life. Last week, one of our Drop-In Centers sisters who is a survivor of human trafficking was drugged and raped by a woman. In her unit there is an elderly woman who sleeps with a sharp coat hanger to protect herself. Can you imagine being homeless in Columbus, Ohio? Add the Covid 19 pandemic the fear attached to it makes shelters undesirable. THEY NEED SAFE PLACES like Drop-In Centers and to work with trench workers who they trust and respect.

On May 12, the Nurses Week ended. Florence Nightingale, the lady with the lamp during the Crimean war founded the nursing profession. She said, "I think one's feeling waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results." She implemented infection control measures, by going against the male dominated profession to saved lives. Like her with my holistic nursing approach I would like to implement harm reduction strategies to eliminate poverty in the people we serve. Poverty is multifaceted it effects the whole person and the community it exists. Funds are needed to keep our collaboratives with other smaller nonprofits on going, unlike the larger ones with their competitive approach.

It takes special folks to work in the trenches. We are exposed to infectious diseases and viruses, yet we still serve with dignity, respect, and compassion. I have become a nurse on the streets treating MRSA infected wounds, and removing sutures, staples, and cleaning busted lips, and applying steri strips, to women and transwomen. Why? Medical facilities are jaded and stigmatized them. I have a solution and it is through the verb Love. It is the unconditional love that makes our Love Tribe unique. It is through sublime audacity that I have not lost my sanity. You cannot fathom the stuff I have seen and witness in



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our streets. The many lives victimized and lost to fatal overdoses and crime. Last year we received funds from the CARES Act, and we purchased another red commercial vehicle to spend quality time with the Human Trafficking victims and homeless men. The Love Bug Street Outreach Program consist of 2 commercial vehicles they have labeled the Love Bugs. They are branded with empowering words. We serve them several times during the week. We provide a meal, hygiene kit, first aid, clothes, shoes, Narcan, and escort them into recovery or hospital settings when they are ready. We need 2 other vehicles and staffing to expand those efforts. We have been doing this work for 5 years and we are women. They protect and respect us in the 4 corners. These harm reduction strategies including the Drop-In Center are effective. They see the vehicle as a beacon of hope in their desperation. We need separate Drop-In Centers for women and men in the 4 corners of our city with a love bug they can identify with.

Poverty is multifaceted and has contributed to the health crisis. Our homeless folks have no IDs and social security numbers so having a Drop-In Center can help by linking them to agencies that can do that for them. We do not believe in the duplication of services. We need to contain the homeless folks in the areas instead of pushing them to the West Side. The large nonprofit corporations receive funding from federal, local, and private sectors. Here are some examples ADAMH, Community Shelter Board, and the Salvation Army. Yet they still recycle ineffective strategies that contribute to the tragedy in the underserved communities where we serve. Can you look at their overhead costs? They have monies that go towards salaries while working remotely from 9 am to 5pm, they have fringe benefits and maintenance funds for their facilities, they are exempt from paying property taxes unlike 1DL2H. While the real trenchworkers continue to work directly with the vulnerable populations. Are they not aware that most of the overdoses and violence happens after 5pm? By the way, our hours of operation are after 2p and 3p. In the past 5 years we have become the TeleHelp (Tell and Help) of the vulnerable populations we serve by telling our senators and local leaders including our city council person in charge of health and human services to fund our justice cause and their red tape has contributed to the blood of our folks slain on our streets. Crime is at an all-time high including domestic violence. I believe healthcare is a human right. Millions of dollars have been spent on TeleHealth while many of our homeless folks lack cellphones. I am informing you of this today so you can remember me with favor, O my God, for all of what the trenchworkers have done for these hurting people. We need you to listen.

Throughout history we have state agencies and nonprofits who have stolen our ideas. However, 1DL2H is a benchmark of grassroots movements. We solely rely on the community to help us in the war of poverty that has created the public health hazard. Gentrification has pushed so many to the west side of Columbus. Tax abatements for the developers and our schools need millions of dollars of renovations, and motor sensory rooms for our children who are traumatized by living in poverty and some are couch surfing. Affordable housing is unaffordable. We have two safe houses serving survivors of Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Disorder. In the past, I have had women who could not pay the \$300 rent and utilities? Who can afford a one-bedroom apartment rent of \$697 on



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minimum wage? We have NO Safe houses for Transwomen over 24 years old. The recovery sites place them in units with men. They face sexual harassment and assaults.

I have some great ideas that have proven to be effective in larger cities and we do not want to be nationally in top 10 cities for homelessness. Last year, we served 3094 human trafficking and in 2019 we served 1511 excluding the men. This year we are counting the men. Our numbers are real because we have direct contact with them as compassionate messengers. WE need funds for full-time Drop-In Centers in the other 3 corners of human and drug trafficking for men and women in our city and provide them with their basic needs. A Drop-In Center is a Harm Reduction Strategy where victims receive services from nonjudgmental professionals and peer supporters in a holistic and trauma responsive approach. Many have dual diagnoses of mental and substance abuse disorder. The courts, police departments and others see them as prostitutes. I see them as someone's child and a destitute person who lacks love from leaders.

Ohio continues to be on the top five for Human Trafficking, opiate overdose deaths and criminal activities. As a result, of the ineffective strategies of local leaders who purposely ignored us they criminalized human beings we serve in the streets, alleys and abandoned buildings.

We need change. As elected leaders I ask, does any act that violates the mental, physical, spiritual, and environmental health factors of human life is acceptable in the US constitution? NO! Human Trafficking is a HEALTH HAZARD & a CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY one of the root causes is poverty. On behalf of the silent Human Trafficking Victims and homeless folks, I ask for you to give us \$7 million to continue to work with grassroots movements have more Drop-In Centers, Love Bugs, Safe Houses, affordable tiny homes, and villages and empower our people to become positive contributors of society. Our folks want to work and keep our communities clean and healthy. Columbus Works and the Columbus Homeless Coalition are some examples of partnering organizations who have success stories like ours. So PLEASE listen and work with a nurse so our state capital of Columbus, can eradicate poverty, human trafficking, violence, homelessness, unemployment, and other systemic forms of oppression.

Let us learn from the human body all systems work properly in homeostasis. As a legislative body choose to fund our noble cause by giving us \$7 million to serve the Columbus most vulnerable populations by our innovative methods to keep our streets clean from homeless people and into safe havens and affordable housing. I hope you can join our justice cause and believe in 1DivineLine2Health motto "Love Heals the Sick and Love Heals the World." Thank you and God Bless you!

Respectfully,

Esther Flores BSN, RN, MBA