

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

May 14, 2024

Representative Jean Schmidt  
Chair, House Families and Aging Committee  
1 Capitol Square,  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Delivered via email: [OHRFamilies&AgingCommittee@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:OHRFamilies&AgingCommittee@ohiohouse.gov)

The Honorable Chair Schmidt:

My name is Terra Fox Williams and I am the President & CEO for YWCA Dayton. There are 13 YWCAs in Ohio and we are driven by a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and support women who are survivors of gender-based violence.

YWCA Dayton provides 24/7, year-round shelter and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other forms of intimate-partner and gender-based violence. In 2023, YWCA Dayton's domestic violence services sheltered 255 women and children; provided 15,229 nights of stay in shelter; and answered 4,934 crisis calls.

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill 14 and urge you to consider the profound impact it could have on both survivors of domestic violence and their children in Ohio. As advocates for the well-being of all Ohioans, it is imperative to recognize the potential harm HB 14 could inflict on some of our most vulnerable community members.

HB 14's premise of imposing equal parenting time and decision-making without adequate safeguards fails to consider the unique challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence. For survivors, ensuring the safety and well-being of their children is paramount, yet HB 14's approach risks undermining their efforts to protect themselves and their children from further harm.

Survivors of domestic violence often endure immense barriers to accessing justice and safety, and HB 14 exacerbates these challenges by placing undue pressure on survivors to navigate complex legal processes without sufficient support. This could result in survivors being coerced into shared parenting agreements that prioritize the rights of their abusers over the safety and well-being of their children.

Moreover, HB 14's lack of clarity on terms such as "equal parenting time" and "equal decision-making" leaves survivors and their children vulnerable to further manipulation and abuse. Without clear guidelines and protections, survivors may find themselves trapped in endless litigation and subjected to ongoing trauma as they fight to protect themselves and their children from harm.

Furthermore, HB 14's imposition of monetary sanctions on parents who make false allegations of abuse could deter survivors from seeking help and protection for themselves and their children. Survivors already face disbelief and skepticism when reporting abuse, and HB 14's punitive measures could further discourage them from coming forward, perpetuating cycles of violence and trauma.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the profound impact HB 14 could have on both survivors of domestic violence and their children, and to vote against its passage. Let us work together to develop policies that prioritize the safety and well-being of all Ohio families, especially those affected by domestic violence.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terra fox Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Terra Fox Williams  
*President & CEO*