

Ohio House Finance Committee
Substitute House Bill 33
Testimony
Ann Bischoff, CEO, Star House
Apr 20, 2023

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chairman LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and Members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on Substitute House Bill 33. My name is Ann Bischoff and I am the CEO of Star House.

In Franklin County alone, there is a baseline of 3,000 individual young people, ages 14-24, who experience homelessness in a year's time— and we believe there could be thousands more. The common denominator of their experience is disconnection from family. Half were in foster care at some point; others ran away from abuse in the home; some were kicked out of their parents' home for being pregnant or unwanted. Significant lack of affordable housing is also a major factor.

Star House opened in 2006 as part of a NIDA-funded research project of The Ohio State University, designed to uncover proven practices for meeting the unique needs of teens and young adults experiencing homelessness. Today, Star House continues to operate the only 24/7/365 drop-in center in Central Ohio for these young people—as well as the only drop-in center in the nation that hosts continuous, onsite best practice research. This is the only space in our region where a young person in this circumstance can have immediate access to safety and resources around the clock.

Star House served 1,160 individual young people in 2022, up from 819 in the previous year. And we expect to serve more than 1,400 individual young people, and in some cases their small children, this year. Ongoing research proves that this model works. Among young people who have accessed our center for 90 or more days, 73% obtained employment, dispelling the myth that young people experiencing homelessness don't want to work; 72% obtained housing, even in the midst of an affordable housing crisis; 88% chose to participate in clinical therapy or case management and we are seeing young people heal from PTSD; 81% accessed medical care, thanks to our on-site partners, such as Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus Public Health, PrimaryOne, Anthem and CareSource; 80% obtained crucial IDs allowing them to sign a lease, get a job and enroll in school. Star House also partners with Finance Fund and the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority to provide housing for young people exiting homelessness at Carol Stewart Village in Columbus.

Given this success, we plan to open additional drop-in centers and villages to meet the growing need and demand for our evidence-based services, starting with Central and Northwest Ohio. By the end of 2025, our plan is to add two additional drop-in centers and one additional village in Columbus and Toledo in order to meet the needs of more Ohio youth in more neighborhoods.

We are deeply grateful for the state and the Ohio House's longstanding, generous support of the mission of Star House, which enables us to continually meet the needs of one of our state's most vulnerable populations and to plan for growth. Today, we request this committee's support of Star House's budget amendment to ensure our continued success in serving Ohio's youth. Thank you so much for your time and the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.