



Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 33
Senate Finance Committee
Ed Gemerchak, Vice President of Behavioral Services, Y-Haven
YMCA of Greater Cleveland
May 25, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 33. My name is Ed Gemerchak, and I am the Vice President of Behavioral Services at the YMCA of Greater Cleveland. Formed in 1993, Y-Haven provides evidence-based addiction treatment for men and women who are experiencing homelessness, re-entering the community from incarceration, or recovering from Opioid Use Disorder. With 250 beds available, Y-Haven is the largest residential treatment provider in the State of Ohio.

Y-Haven provides a wide-range of essential services including Substance Use Disorder Treatment, Mental Health Counseling, Vocational Services, Recovery Housing, and an array of cultural and recreational opportunities. We are proud of our exceptional service outcomes including addiction treatment outcomes nearly 3 times the national average with 65% of participants completing 90 days of intensive outpatient treatment. Additional measures of success include: 80% of participants obtaining employment or job education/training; over half of our participants obtaining permanent housing upon their exit from the program; and 78% of participants report improved familial and social supports.

Y-Haven for Women is our most recent service expansion. For many years, the Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care has not been able to provide transitional housing or addiction treatment for women experiencing homelessness. As a result, many women with addiction and mental illness have simply remained on the streets or in Cleveland's Emergency Women's Shelter until they can find permanent housing. Utilizing the same expert care the YMCA provides men experiencing homelessness, Y-Haven for Women has begun providing temporary housing and behavioral health services to women experiencing homelessness who face especially high barriers to housing. This project fits neatly into Cuyahoga County's newly minted Strategic Plan for Homeless Services, which cited a lack of transitional services in the region.

We have seen an incredible need for these services since starting this program in February. I ask for your support of a \$250,000 appropriation each fiscal year, which will allow us house and treat 36 homeless women at a time and at least 50 women each year, doubling the number we can currently serve. Approximately 10% of those served will be from Summit, Lorain and other nearby counties. This is a one-time request for start-up purposes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for your consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.