



Proponent Testimony on House Bill 33
Senate Finance Committee
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May 30, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 33. As Ohio's statewide coalition, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

The Rape Crisis Centers' line item was established in 2014 to address the deficit of rape crisis services for victims of sexual assault in Ohio. Prior to creation of this line item, Ohioans in just 42 counties had access to Rape Crisis Center services. Today 36 rape crisis programs extend their home county borders to provide services to survivors in 78 counties. OAESV provides stopgap services in the remaining 10 counties (Erie, Darke, Shelby, Miami, Logan, Clermont, Pickaway, Fayette, Ross, Coshocton).

Unfortunately, over half of women and nearly 1 in 4 men will experience sexual violence in their lifetime.¹ Rape Crisis Centers work with county systems to make sure that a rape crisis advocate arrives at the hospital after a survivor has reported for medical treatment after a sexual assault. This person provides support for the survivor, and connection to ongoing advocacy support for future healing, and system navigation. No other agencies provide hospital advocacy – which has bridged the gap between survivors and law enforcement, prosecution, civil systems, and mental health treatment access. Rape Crisis Centers also provide trained advocates to accompany survivors in court hearings and other legal system operations, connecting survivors with legal representation when needed, and assisting in accessing essential community resources.

While the impact of sexual violence is vast, rape crisis programs are the least funded victim service providers in the Nation as a whole – programs in Ohio, like their peers nationally, qualify for less federal funding than programs serving other types of crime victims.

The past few years have been an extremely challenging period for Ohio's Rape Crisis Centers. Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and its Crime Victims Fund (CVF) provide grant funding for states and territories generated by fines from criminal penalties. Recent years have seen significant cuts to this funding across the country, including the over 300 VOCA recipients in Ohio. Between 2018 and 2020, there was a 67% drop in VOCA funds awarded to the State of Ohio, from \$117 million to \$58 million. In 2021, the amount awarded to Ohio was further reduced to \$36 million.

¹ Basile, K. C., Smith, S. G., Kresnow, M. J., Khatiwada, S., & Leemis, R. W. (2022). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2016/2017 report on sexual violence. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsreportonsexualviolence.pdf>

Between 2021 and 2022, Rape Crisis Centers experienced a 42% reduction in their VOCA awards. Funding in 2023 remains level at the amount it was reduced to in 2022.

Congress passed the VOCA Fix Act in 2021, directing deposits from deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements to the Crime Victims Fund in an attempt to increase deposits to the fund in the long term. However, the VOCA Fix is not sufficient to fully restore the health of the Fund, nor has it fixed the shrinking deposits into our state. In fact, we are bracing for additional cuts for FY 2024. This funding stream will not be restored quickly, and may take several additional years and further strategies enacted by Congress to recover.

Based on the President's FY 2024 budget request, we are bracing for a 37% reduction from the FY 2023 enacted level. A cut of this size would be devastating to Ohio's rape crisis programs that are continuing to see an increased demand for their services.

As reliance must shift from VOCA funding, we respectfully urge this Committee and the Ohio Senate to, at minimum, maintain the \$15 million allocation for the Rape Crisis Center line item in the budget. While this increase will not make programs whole from the loss of federal funding, it will help to lessen the impact of the cuts.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.