



1855 E. Dublin-Granville Road, Suite 301  
Columbus, Ohio 43229  
Phone: 614-781-9651  
[www.odvn.org](http://www.odvn.org)

**Senate Community Revitalization Committee  
Proponent Testimony for SB 90  
May 17, 2023**

Alicia Williamson, MSW, LSW  
Director of Training and Program Services  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chairman Hoagland, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Community Revitalization Committee,

My name is Alicia Williamson, and I am the Director of Training and Program Services for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on SB 90, which would allow social workers in Ohio and several other states to practice in multiple states with a multistate license.

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is Ohio's federally designated domestic violence coalition, representing 76 local domestic violence organizations throughout the state. In calendar year 2022, ODVN programs sheltered 9,886 survivors (approximately 5,594 adults and 4,292 children) and provided nearly 73,000 survivors and their children with housing, legal advocacy, and other supportive services.<sup>1</sup> Many of ODVN's shelters and member programs employ licensed social workers. Furthermore, domestic violence survivors often interact with licensed social workers while seeking additional services beyond shelter, such as mental health care.

Multistate licensing would incentivize social workers to remain in the field, reducing turnover rates and ensuring the continuity of quality services for Ohio's residents. Many individuals, particularly those in rural areas or underserved regions, face limited access to social work services due to a shortage of practitioners. The waiting list for a new patient experiencing mental health issues can be several months due to capacity, even though Ohio is above the national average for people with mental illnesses.<sup>2</sup> Those seeking to find a Black or Hispanic therapist face even more limited options. According to a recent study, White people had the highest access to mental health services, with just under half of people receiving treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) surveyed its 76 member programs January 5 to 27, 2023 about the prevalence of domestic violence. A total of 74 programs responded, a 97% response rate.

<sup>2</sup> Intersecting Pandemics: The impact of Intimate Partner Violence, COVID-19, and Wage and Worker Supports Equity in Ohio. (2021). Available from [Intersecting Pandemics Final.pdf \(odvn.org\)](#)



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About two-thirds or more of individuals did not receive treatment for all other racial groups.<sup>3</sup> If passed, SB 90 will help expand the critical mental health services needed for Black and Brown communities.

Additionally, SB 90 would significantly improve the continuity of care for clients, including survivors of domestic violence who often relocate to escape abuse. In calendar year 2022, ODVN's relocation program has helped 482 survivors and 548 children with security deposits, rent, transportation, moving expenses, or utilities so they can move into permanent safe housing, including out-of-state housing options.<sup>4</sup> By fostering professional mobility and enhancing the efficacy of social work services, this legislation would bolster Ohio's social welfare system, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the necessary support, regardless of their geographical location.

Ohio, along with the other proposed states joining in the interstate occupational licensure compact, stands to benefit from a highly skilled and adaptable social work workforce capable of addressing the diverse needs of its population. However, the bill would be stronger if the Council on Social Work Accreditation, rather than the Council on Higher Education, oversees what social work programs qualify for inclusion, as Ohio law already suggests. Additionally, the proposed legislation should include adherence to the NASW Code of Ethics as a requirement for states in the compact agreement and participating social workers.

Multistate licensing will allow social workers to step in and bridge the gap where shortages exist, effectively ensuring that all individuals have access to the support they need. On behalf of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and our 76 member programs, I would like to thank Senator Roegner for leading the way in redefining the social work profession that benefits both social workers and the survivors they serve.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 2022 Impact Report: ODVN Relocation and Safety Assistance. (2023). Available from [Impact-Sheet-for-Grants-2022.pdf \(odvn.org\)](https://www.odvn.org/Impact-Sheet-for-Grants-2022.pdf)