



Ohio Senate Finance Committee, May 2025

Refuge Testimony Supporting Amendment HC_136_0674

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Finance Committee—thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Austin Hill, and I lead Strategic Partnerships at The Refuge, a long-term, faith-based addiction recovery program in the Hilltop neighborhood of Columbus. We serve men from across Ohio who are seeking a way out of addiction and a path toward lasting change.

For over 25 years, The Refuge has walked with thousands of men through the difficult and life-changing journey from addiction to self-sufficiency. We offer a 13-month residential program built on accountability, purpose, and community. And we do it completely free of charge, because we believe cost should never be a barrier to transformation.

Our funding model is diverse. Less than a third of our annual operating budget comes from government sources, including city, county, and state support. We are time-tested, relationally focused, fiscally sound, state-certified, and results-driven. That makes us one of the premier addiction recovery programs in Ohio at no cost to the men we serve.

I'm here today to respectfully urge your support for the House-passed operating budget, including Amendment HC_136_0674, which invests in our existing programming and builds on the bipartisan support this legislature has already shown.



State support through the last two capital budgets has helped us deepen our impact, and that impact is clear:

- 92% of graduates are employed full time
- 86% report stable housing
- 94% are food secure
- 90% avoid ER visits for drug or alcohol-related reasons
- 96% have no further involvement with the justice system
- For every \$1 invested, there is a \$2.88 return to the community

These numbers represent more than data; they represent changed lives, reunited families, and safer, stronger communities.

I understand the weight of the decisions before you, and the many worthy requests you're considering. But I believe that continued investment in proven, community-based recovery programs like The Refuge is one of the wisest and most compassionate choices this body can make.

Thank you again for your time and for your service to the people of Ohio. I respectfully ask for your support of the House budget, including Amendment HC_136_0674.