



Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Substitute House Bill 96
Testimony
Ann Bischoff, CEO, Star House
May 29, 2025

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chairman Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Substitute House Bill 96. My name is Ann Bischoff, and I serve as the CEO of Star House, a nonprofit organization committed to meeting the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

In Franklin County alone, as many as 10,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 24 experience homelessness each year. Nationally, that number rises to four million. These young people come from every walk of life, but they share one common thread: disconnection from family. Many have aged out of foster care. Others have fled abusive homes, or were forced out for being pregnant or simply unwanted. The deepening affordable housing crisis exacerbates their challenges—with four people waiting for every one available low-income unit.

Investing in these young people now prevents chronic homelessness later, resulting in significant long-term savings for Ohio taxpayers.

Star House began in 2006 as a federally funded research project through The Ohio State University, designed to identify evidence-based practices for serving youth experiencing homelessness. Today, we operate the only 24/7/365 drop-in center in Central Ohio tailored to the needs of this population—and the only center of its kind in the country that hosts continuous, on-site research to ensure we're using proven methods. What's more, this is the only space in our region where a young person in this circumstance can have immediate access to safety and life-saving resources around the clock.

In 2021, Star House served 819 individual young people. Since then, thanks to crucial support from the State of Ohio, we have served 3,251 individual, unduplicated youth. That's a 297% increase since the last biennium. While based in Franklin County, our reach is statewide. Just last year, we served youth from 37 different Ohio counties, including many from border regions.

And despite this significant growth, we are committed to turning no young person in need away.

Our model works:

- 79% of working-age youth who engage with us for 90 days or more secure employment—debunking the myth that these youth are unwilling to work.
- 59% obtain housing, despite the scarcity of affordable units.
- 89% choose to participate in therapy or case management—many begin healing from PTSD and trauma.
- 80% receive medical care through our onsite partners, including Nationwide Children's Hospital and Columbus Public Health.
- 74% obtain essential identification, allowing them to sign leases, get jobs, and enroll in school.
- 100% gain basic needs and transportation assistance.

In partnership with Finance Fund and the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, we also provide long-term housing at Carol Stewart Village for youth transitioning out of homelessness.

Now, thanks to your support, we are expanding. We are under contract for a second drop-in center on Columbus' South Side, and we are actively engaged in a community-wide initiative to bring a drop-in center and supportive housing to Toledo.

To meet growing demand for our life-saving services, continued operational funding from the State of Ohio is essential. Your investment will enable us to break the cycle of homelessness for thousands of vulnerable youth across our state.

We are deeply grateful for the Ohio Senate's steadfast support of Star House for more than a decade. That support has enabled us not only to meet urgent needs but also to plan for sustainable growth.

Today, I respectfully request this committee's support for Star House's earmark of \$1.25M in each fiscal year. Your continued investment will ensure Ohio's youth have a safe place to turn—and a real chance to thrive.

Thank you for your time and leadership. I'm happy to answer any questions.