



**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 96
Senate Finance Committee
Rosa Beltré, CEO & President
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
May 29, 2025**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks Hudson, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee: I represent the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the federally designated statewide coalition advancing comprehensive support for survivors and the prevention of sexual violence.

We thank the General Assembly, Attorney General, and Governor for their continued support of rape crisis services. House Bill 96 is a critical step in reinforcing these life-saving programs. The Rape Crisis Centers' Line Item, created in 2013, has helped expand services from 42 to 78 counties, supporting thousands of survivors annually. In the remaining 10 counties, OAESV provides interim services to ensure no survivors are left behind.

Rape crisis centers operate 24/7 hotlines and hospital response teams. No other agencies provide around-the-clock support during forensic exams. These advocates also offer legal advocacy, counseling, housing assistance, and more. In 2024 alone, Ohio's rape crisis center hotlines served an estimated 40,000 individuals, and advocates provided over 500 hours of legal advocacy weekly.

Sexual violence affects over half of women and nearly one in four men in their lifetime. Survivors need immediate and long-term care – whether they seek help days or decades after the trauma. Advocates play a pivotal role in the healing process, offering nonjudgmental support that helps survivors stay connected to critical systems like law enforcement.

As you know, federal funding for victim services, especially through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), has become increasingly unpredictable in recent years. This is largely due to shifting national priorities and budgetary constraints over several years at the federal level. VOCA remains the main federal funding source for victim services and Ohio has seen a 77% reduction in funds allocated to our state – from \$117 million in 2018 to \$26 million in 2024. While the VOCA Fix Act in 2021 helped stabilize the Fund, full recovery is years away. That's why steady, reliable state investment is so essential. By maintaining funding at the

state level, Ohio can ensure our communities are not left vulnerable to decisions made outside of our state. We can take responsibility here at home to support survivors, protect public safety, and avoid interruptions to critical services caused by external budget swings.

State funding is now more vital than ever. In FY 2024, 58% of rape crisis center staff were supported by the State Line Item, enabling us to serve over 70,000 survivors and provide prevention education to 95,000 Ohioans. This investment is essential both for survivor support and violence prevention.

We respectfully urge you to maintain the \$15 million annual allocation for the Rape Crisis Centers' Line Item, consistent with the Governor's proposed budget and the House's version of the budget.

Thank you for your time and support. I am available to answer any questions at this time.