



174 E Long Street, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-781-9651
www.odvn.org

**Senate Finance Committee
Proponent Testimony for H.B. 96
May 29, 2025**

Maria York, Policy Director
Ohio Domestic Violence Network

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is Ohio's federally designated domestic violence coalition, representing 76 local domestic violence programs throughout the state. Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for H.B. 96. We appreciate Attorney General Yost, Governor DeWine, and the House for all including level funding for domestic violence programs (GRF 055504) in their FY 26-27 budgets.

One survivor's story shows why this funding matters.

"I have been a victim of domestic violence for 11 years, but I didn't know how to help myself until I met the advocates at Lorain County Safe Harbor... They were the first people to say to me that what I was living through was not normal. They said THIS IS ABUSE... My life is so different now. I'm proud of myself. This is the longest I've gone being away from him—and that's because of them."

Her story is included at the end of this testimony. But what it underscores is this: domestic violence programs like Lorain County Safe Harbor save lives. They provide emergency shelter, court support, safety planning, legal advocacy, and trauma-informed care, often with limited resources. The current line-item funds help make that possible.

Funding for domestic violence programs is a life-saving investment. According to ODVN's annual membership application, our 76 member programs:¹

- Answered over 121,000 crisis communications, a **34% increase** from the prior year.
- Provided emergency shelter to a total of 9,707 survivors, including 3,743 children. However, 8,194 survivors seeking shelter – or nearly 1 in every 2 survivors – were turned away due to insufficient capacity.
- An additional 1,050 survivors and children were served through transitional housing programs.

¹ The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) collected annual membership data from its 76 member programs January through February 2024. All member programs responded.



174 E Long Street, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-781-9651
www.odvn.org

Emergency and transitional housing programming combined provided more than 496,000 bed nights.

- Legal advocates at ODVN's member programs assisted 26,074 survivors in municipal, juvenile, and domestic courts.
- In addition to providing emergency shelter, our programs provided support groups, transportation, and other supportive services to nearly 100,000 survivors and their children, a **35% increase** over the prior year.

Domestic violence also carries a substantial cost to the state. In February 2025, ODVN released a study on the economic impacts of domestic violence in Ohio. The cost—estimated at nearly **\$1.2 billion**—affects all Ohioans, from the direct losses experienced by victims, the cost associated with criminal justice and healthcare systems and costs borne by employers and businesses.² The largest measured economic losses for Ohio are those resulting from physical health care (\$264.8 million, 22.9%), loss of life (\$239.9 million, 20.8%), and loss of worker productivity (\$227.7 million, 19.7%).

While Ohio's current funding rate increased to 85 cents per capita in the FY24-25 budget, it still lags far behind neighboring states: \$1.71 in Pennsylvania, \$2.39 in Michigan, and over \$3 in Kentucky.³ If sustained at \$20 million, our per capita rate remains at 85 cents and still well below the level of support domestic violence shelters receive in neighboring states. Sustaining the current level of state funding is essential to keeping programs open and survivors safe.

We ask that you continue to maintain level funding for the domestic violence line-item. The state's investment in these services reduces long-term public costs, prevents future harm, and rebuilds lives, like the survivor who bravely shared her story today.

Thank you for your commitment to Ohio's families.

² Economic Impact of Intimate Partner Violence in Ohio (2025). https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Economic_Impact_of_Intimate_Partner_Violence_in_Ohio.pdf

³ ODVN considered only the funding used by our member programs to provide direct services to survivor and surveyed surrounding state coalitions on their general revenue funds for FY 24. Funding streams for prevention, training and other services not directly allocated to domestic violence survivors were not included in these calculations. Additionally, Michigan's member programs serve both sexual assault and domestic violence survivors.



174 E Long Street, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-781-9651
www.odvn.org

Attachment: Survivor Testimony

Submitted with testimony from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network in support of H.B. 96

My name is Toni, and I have been a victim of domestic violence for 11 years, but I didn't know how to help myself until I met the advocates at Lorain County Safe Harbor.

I started dating Nick when I was 14. He was physically abusive most of that time and mentally. I remember when I was younger, we were sitting on some church steps. He asked me a question. He didn't like my answer, got angry and strangled me for so long, the father of a friend had to make him stop.

He tried to run me off the road while I was driving at least five times. One time he chased me with his car over my yard. Friends were outside and family members were outside, and they just laughed. I called the cops. When they arrived, I said he tried to kill me, and they just walked away thinking it was a joke. Eventually since everybody else laughed, I did too.

The problem was I didn't know that living like that wasn't normal.

I came from a huge family, and with a lot of friends this was considered normal. When I tried to speak up about it, it was brushed over or laughed about or I was told I'm playing victim. To this day, they do not even know 10% of what I've been through.

The staff at Lorain County Safe Harbor are the first people to say to me that what I was living through was not normal for a human being. They said THIS IS ABUSE. They were the first people to make me feel like we were loved.

I had pressed charges and gotten restraining orders a couple of times. But I didn't follow through, because I was scared. I thought he might do jail time. He was my son's dad, and I thought it would be wrong to put him in jail. Throughout this time, I've always been in school or working or sometimes doing both -- no matter the chaos.

Things started to change in 2023. I told myself "get up and do something." That March Nick destroyed my house, and I finally started contacting Lorain County Safe Harbor. I sent them texts and emails, and they stayed in touch with me. Every once in a while, someone would call to check on me. They always let me know the hotline was available 24/7. I moved into the shelter in August of that year and stayed about a month. While I was there, I learned about the cycles of abuse.

Before I worked with the shelter, the court system didn't work for me. I told the advocates the police don't take me seriously. They told me to start documenting the abuse. They said report to the police, save those text messages and make videos. Every time I went to file a police report or went to court, someone from Lorain County Safe Harbor went with me. And the court system started to work.



174 E Long Street, Suite 200
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-781-9651
www.odvn.org

One day, while I was living at the shelter, he came to the door, pounding on it, demanding to be let in. The shelter called police, and I moved to a shelter in Cleveland. The shelter pressed charges against him. The police picked him up and he sat in jail for a while.

When he got out of jail, he was released on home incarceration and was wearing an ankle monitor. I decided it was time to go back home, and Lorain County Safe Harbor provided cameras and locks for my windows.

Nick blamed me for his situation and sent me a text threatening to find me. He said he cut off his ankle monitor. I sent Jill, the director of Lorain County Safe Harbor, the text and she told me to drive to the police station while she called the police. While I drove, I gave her a few locations where the police might be able to find him. The police found him at the third location and arrested him. This was a big deal for me and my son because after that, he went back to jail and sat there for 6 months.

With help from Lorain County Safe Harbor, I moved into another new apartment. But he found me again. Last July I contacted Jill again and let her know what was going on. Nick said some threatening things pertaining to my son. Jill and the staff helped me press charges, and Nick was incarcerated again for violating his protection order.

I have a six-year-old son, Wynter, who has seen a lot. Someone at the shelter said my son should get counseling. While we were at the shelter, they got him a couple of counseling sessions, and they told me how to get him a counselor through Ohio Guidestone. The counseling is helping Wynter a lot. Being around the chaos had an effect on him. But now I can see a huge difference in him.

Today we live in a different complex. Again with the help of the Lorain County Safe Harbor. This time we used the Safe at Home program, so now my address is secret.

My life is so different now. They introduced me to so many things. Another advocate helped me find the church my son and I go to. They've helped me network with new people and built my confidence. Now I am learning how to drive semi-trucks. I'm going to get a Class A Commercial Driver's license, the highest level. I hope to be driving semis on the road in June.

I am very proud of myself. This is the longest I've gone being away from him, and that's because of them. I want to thank Lorain County Safe Harbor for sticking by my side no matter the decisions I made. It has been a roller coaster ride, and they made a huge difference in my life.

Thank you.