



Ohio Senate Finance Committee, June 2025

## Refuge Testimony Advocating for Amendment HC\_136\_0674

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

If you had walked into The Refuge last Friday, you might've seen a man sharing his story, maybe for the first time in his life, with another man beside him. He was taking those first, terrifying steps toward healing and recovery. Just down the hall, another man, seven months sober, was getting home from work, gaining real-world job skills through one of our employer partners. He's rebuilding his future, not sitting in a jail cell.

That's what happens at The Refuge. We walk with men as they reclaim their lives, starting with each other, and extending to meaningful, stable work. That's what's at stake.

My name is Austin Hill, and I lead Strategic Partnerships at The Refuge, a long-term, faith-based addiction recovery program serving men from across Ohio. We've helped thousands of men leave addiction behind and rebuild their lives, families, and futures. Our 13-month program is free, state-certified, and community-supported.

The House, led by Republican leadership, recognized the value of what we do and included funding for The Refuge in their version of the operating budget. We are deeply grateful for that. But we were cut from the Senate's version. I'm here today to humbly but urgently ask you to add us back in.

This isn't a new request. In the last three years, your past investment has helped us deliver measurable results. Most notably, from a budgetary perspective, **every \$1 invested in The Refuge saves the community \$2.88** by reducing incarceration, emergency care, and public assistance costs

These outcomes don't just change lives, they lower the cost burden to the State.



We aren't asking for a new program or expansion. We're asking for continued support for what already works. We stretch every dollar, with less than a third of our budget coming from government sources. We're not looking for charity. We're offering a return on investment and a lifeline for men who would otherwise cycle through our courts, hospitals, and prisons.

Members of this Committee, I know you face hard decisions. But cutting proven recovery programming like The Refuge will cost the state more in the long run, financially, socially, and morally.

On behalf of the men we serve and the families they're fighting to restore, I respectfully ask you to include funding for The Refuge in the Senate's budget. Help us keep doing what works. Help us keep saving lives and saving the state money while we do it.

**Thank you for your time and your service.**