

# **Ohio Senate Finance Committee**

## **Opponent Testimony of Ohio Council of YWCAs**

### **SUB HB 96 – FY 26/27 State Operating Budget**

**June 6, 2025**

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

My name is Elizabeth Brown, and I serve as the President and Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Columbus. I am also a proud member of the Ohio Council of YWCAs, which includes 13 YWCA chapters serving communities across the state.

Serving the Greater Columbus Metro area in Franklin County, YWCA Columbus has housed women in need since its inception in 1886. Our services today include housing vulnerable families in our Family Center for homeless families, our permanent supportive housing in the Women's Residency Program for women with disabilities, and child enrichment in our shelter and afterschool programs in Westerville, Gahanna, and the United Schools Network. These programs focus on supporting among the most at-risk in the greater Columbus area. We provide a trauma-informed curriculum for our early childhood education center within the Family Center and incorporate trauma-informed programming and counseling in both the Center and our permanent supportive housing facility. We combat homelessness and support our community through aiding in the transition into the housing market for women and families, as well as develop safe spaces for at-risk children for education and access to stability.

Today I offer written opponent testimony to the Senate substitute version of House Bill 96. In the Governor's introduced version of the budget, the Ohio Council of YWCAs was allocated \$1.5 million per fiscal year. The House-passed version made broad reductions to the TANF Block Grant, which cut our funding in half – to \$750,000 annually. The Senate substitute bill released on Tuesday eliminated this funding entirely for both FY 2026 and FY 2027. I respectfully and humbly urge this committee to accept our proposed amendment that would restore flat funding of \$1.5 million per year, as originally proposed by the Governor.

Your investment has already produced real results. In the last biennium, with state support, YWCA Columbus:

- Provided **66,933 meals** to families at the YWCA Family Center, ensuring youth and families experiencing food insecurity had access to nutritious meals.
- A total of **275 families** facing challenges in accessing childcare and maintaining workforce participation received assistance.
- **177 women** impacted by domestic violence and abuse received vital support services.

YWCA programs don't just meet short-term needs—we offer wraparound services designed to promote long-term stability and well-being. These services are outcome-driven and community-rooted. Last year alone, Ohio YWCA chapters reached more than 90,000 women, children, and family members. In partnership with over 45 school districts and alternative schools statewide, we deliver after-school care, violence prevention education, and youth programming that changes lives.

The need is urgent and growing. In 2023, Ohio reported **36,111 incidents of domestic violence**. Meanwhile, **1 in 5 children in Ohio face hunger**, and **4 in 10 working parents** have had to miss work due to lack of childcare. These numbers reflect the reality we see on the ground every day—and they underscore why this funding is so critical.

We are grateful for the investment made by both the Governor and the House. Their recognition of our collective impact is deeply appreciated. We are now asking the Senate to demonstrate that same support. While we are requesting a restoration to \$1.5 million per fiscal year—as originally proposed by the Governor—we would be grateful for any investment, as it would allow us to reach significantly more individuals and expand our impact across the state. This investment is modest compared to the far-reaching costs of domestic violence and sexual abuse in our communities.

Ohio's YWCAs do far more than respond to crises. We are leaders in preventing gender violence, combating human trafficking, promoting economic stability, and empowering youth and women to lead healthy, self-sufficient lives. This investment would amplify those efforts at a time when communities need them most.

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the committee—thank you for your time, also a special thanks to all of you and your staff for meeting with our YWCA members throughout this budget process, and for your continued commitment to strengthening Ohio's families and communities.