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Ohio Domestic Violence Network
House Government Oversight Committee
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Written Proponent Testimony for HB 74 Enact FY22-23

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, my name is Micaela Deming and I am the Policy Director of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) represents 75 local domestic violence organizations across the state. Last year our programs served nearly 82,500 survivors and their children. Those victims needed shelter (9,045) or help obtaining a protective order or support while they prosecuted their abusers. Many of them were looking for housing and other assistance as they worked to rebuild their lives after experiencing abuse. ODVN appreciates the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 55.

According to the 2020 National Network to End Domestic Violence 24-hour census survey, in a single day in September 2020, our programs served 2,650 domestic violence survivors. They answered 676 crisis calls – that averages over 28 crisis calls per hour. Some programs have experienced a nearly 300% increase in demand for services over the past year. Last fall Ohio's programs cut staff and services after crippling reductions to their most important federal funding source, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program. Ohio's VOCA grants to domestic violence programs were cut by \$7.7 million. From 2019-2021 grants will have been cut by nearly 75%. As a result of these catastrophic cuts, many programs had to reduce staffing.

Our 75 programs are operating with fewer staff – sometimes only a handful of people – to operate 24/7 crisis hotlines, shelter, and emergency response programs. What does this mean for HB 55? These critical domestic violence first responders are unable to take the time to travel to the Statehouse to provide in person testimony before the House and Senate. It means that legislators do not benefit from being able to hear and ask questions of our member programs in Lawrence County, Ashtabula, Williams County, or Cincinnati and every program in between. Domestic violence survivor service providers have first-hand, local information to inform legislation that will affect the survivors they serve and their communities. Ohio's domestic violence programs would be able to participate in more hearings if HB 55 passes.

Testifying before a House committee is the closest experience I have had to arguing before an appellate court. There are multiple attorneys arguing, one at a time, with multiple questioners. The Supreme Court of Ohio is utilizing technology to conduct oral arguments this way right now and has been for a year. I have also viewed recordings from other states and participated in joint commissions in Ohio that have effectively utilized remote virtual technology to conduct sessions. Representatives and Senators were able to ask questions and interact with experts in the field to more fully inform their legislative efforts.

ODVN fully supports HB 55. It is feasible to conduct remote committee meetings and dramatically expands our ability to inform the House on bills affecting domestic violence service providers and survivors in Ohio. Thank you.