



**Proponent testimony on Sub. House Bill 110**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
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**Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence**  
**May 18, 2021**

Chair Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Substitute House Bill 110. As Ohio's statewide coalition, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

One in 4 woman and 1 in 6 men are sexual violence victims before they turn 18. In 2014, the legislature prioritized funding for rape crisis centers by establishing the Rape Crisis Center Fund. Since, this state funding stream has sustained rape crisis services amid devastating federal cuts, even as we have seen major increases in sexual violence and survivors seeking services. In 2020, Ohio rape crisis center Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants were cut by more than \$8 million. At the same time, the monthly rate of crisis hotline calls went up 34% to an average of **2,609 calls per month, and the** monthly number of survivors accessing rape crisis advocacy during the pandemic **increased by 50%**.

**Specifically:**

In all of 2019, **19,147 survivors** accessed advocacy.

In the **first 9 months of 2020** alone, **23,680 survivors** accessed advocacy.

The federal VOCA cuts forced rape crisis programs to lay off staff and cut services. Initially, in February 2021, we were told to prepare for an additional 34% reduction in VOCA funds effective October 1, 2021. However, just last week, many of Ohio's rape crisis programs were provided insight from the Ohio Attorney General's office confirming that they should expect **more significant** cuts this October. During an emergency meeting with our directors after this announcement, programs shared the devastating impact of these notifications. I would like to share a few examples below:

- **Women Helping Women**, a rape crisis center serving **Hamilton, Butler, Brown** and **Adams Counties**, told us that “the announcement caused feelings of renewed anger and powerlessness, thinking of how the additional cuts will impact survivors. Last year there was

a dramatic increase in hours of service they provided working with complex trauma of survivors. **In 24 months, Women Helping Women will experience 71% in VOCA cuts.**”

- **New Directions**, serving **Knox County**, shared that “the letters and VOCA cuts definitely makes it real, even though we knew it was coming. Now, these cuts mean people. Looking people in the eye and changing their lives because of funding.”
- **COMPASS** serves Carroll, Stark, and Tuscarawas Counties. COMPASS reported “For COMPASS, our cut in VOCA will most likely cut out our Advocate Supervisor as well as our remaining line item for telephone costs. Our Advocate Supervisor oversees our on-call advocates and is the main advocate providing support to survivors during regular, office hours. Although these costs will no longer be covered by VOCA, they are still essential to our program. We will have to find alternative funding to cover these costs.”
- **Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program**, whose services cover **Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Meigs, Morgan, Perry, and Vinton** counties, stated “After receiving our letter, SAOP made it mostly to the acceptance stage of grieving, but like grief does - we feel like we’ve got it under control and then we are underwater again. Each new wave comes when my peers at other organizations text me what their cuts look like. It's all just absolutely devastating!”

Rape Crisis programs are the least funded victim service providers in the Nation as a whole – programs in Ohio, like their peers nationally, qualify for less federal funding than programs serving other types of crime. As federal funding accounts for as much as 60% of rape crisis budgets, this disparity rings heavy on services.

We are very grateful that Substitute H.B. 110 increases the Rape Crisis Center Line Item to \$7.3 million each fiscal year. This increase is desperately needed by Ohio’s 35 rape crisis centers that support 77 Ohio counties. However, we must emphasize that 11 counties remain without access to rape crisis center services. Each time this fund allows us to expand services to new counties, the number of survivors accessing services correspondingly increases. We know that sexual violence skyrocketed during the pandemic, and we must ensure survivors in all 88 Ohio counties can access what are often life-saving services.

As reliance must shift from VOCA funding, we respectfully urge this Committee and the Ohio Senate to continue to build on this support **and include an additional increase bringing the Rape Crisis Center line item to \$10 million** each fiscal year. These funds would allow centers to continue to address the needs of survivors of sexual assault. This additional increase is needed to help offset additional federal cuts and to meet the escalating demand<sup>1</sup> for services in counties with existing programs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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<sup>1</sup> Though the number of survivors served statewide has increased 27% since 2015, in many rural counties, the reality is much more severe. In Warren County, for example, ARCS Shelter has experienced an increase of over 100% since 2015.