



**Proponent testimony on Sub. House Bill 110
Senate General Government Budget Committee
Rosa Beltré, Executive Director
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence
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Chair Schaffer, Vice-Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Senate General Government Budget 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 then, 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. This was especially true in 2020 when 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. Further, we have been told to prepare for an additional 34% reduction in VOCA funds effective October 1, 2021.

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 demand¹ 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.

¹ 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.