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Mary O’Doherty, Executive Director  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Senate Transportation Committee  
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### **Written Interested Party Testimony for HB 74 Enact FY22-23**

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, my name is Mary O’Doherty and I am the Executive 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 interested party testimony as the committee considers House Bill 74 Enact FY22-23 Transportation Budget.

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. In that same day, Ohio’s domestic violence programs provided 29 survivors with transportation assistance. Unfortunately, Ohio’s programs turned away 252 victims – about 10% of requests made that day – because they didn’t have enough room or resources to serve them. These unmet needs included requests for transportation assistance.

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, programs had to eliminate any funding they had to assist clients with their day-to-day needs – including transportation funds.

When a domestic violence victim is ready to leave an abusive relationship, transportation concerns begin immediately. How will the adult and child survivors get from their unsafe home to a shelter? Unfortunately, for many survivors, the shelter may be a long distance away, outside of their county. While working with our agencies, survivors may have court dates to attend, a protection order to obtain, a job to seek or get to, children to get to and from school,

medical appointments, counseling appointments, and a host of other needs which require reliable transportation.

We are incredibly grateful to Representative Boyd and the House Finance Committee for including domestic violence survivor needs into this Transportation Budget. The \$5,000 line item will allow under resourced programs to provide bus fare, gas cards, or ride share credits to survivors in need of reliable transportation to get safe and to stay safe. While the amount may not seem significant in such a large budget, it can make a real difference to the survivors that we serve.

Providing funding for domestic violence survivors to have a safe, reliable means of transportation removes a barrier to leaving an abusive situation and increases the opportunities for that family to stay safe. ODVN sincerely appreciates the \$5,000 included in HB 74 for domestic violence survivor transportation assistance.