

WRITTEN TESTIMONY (PROPONENT) OF ELIZABETH BROWN  
OHIO COUNCIL OF YWCAs  
BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
SENATOR MATT DOLAN, CHAIR  
AM.SUB.H.B.33  
MAY 25, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Elizabeth Brown, President and Chief Executive Officer of the YWCA of Columbus and a member of the Ohio Council of YWCAs. Our Council is made up of the 13 YWCA chapters across the State, we are committed to our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women.

I am here to provide proponent testimony in favor of Am.Sub.H.B.33, which would earmark \$1.5 million per year to support specific programming in YWCA chapters that provide direct services to families, women, and children victimized by gender-based violence throughout the State, and to continue and expand community outreach through youth development and prevention programs. More specifically, the bill would support Council programs that:

- Prevent domestic violence,
- Support victims of domestic violence,
- Provide trauma-informed services for survivors of domestic violence, homeless women and families and
- Support outreach and development opportunities through youth development and prevention programming.

These services would include emergency shelters, crisis hotline support and non-residential services. We provide wraparound services that address gender-based violence, including trauma-informed support for survivors such as counseling, case management, substance abuse services and prevention education in the community.

Ohio YWCA member organizations reached more than 90,000 women, girls and family members last year through our programming. Our organizations' current sources of funding include federal and private and sources, and the state in the last biennium also provided TANF funding to the Council so that we could meet ongoing needs of the communities and the vulnerable populations we serve, which was helpful. However, the bill we support for requested funds will increase our ability to serve more individuals in need, improve program quality and increase the impact of those we serve.

Each year, demand for the services provided by Ohio's YWCAs grows, as our programming is much vaster than the two areas for which we are seeking funding. Our major programs include subject matters that address human trafficking and gender violence prevention, as well as Women and Girls' empowerment, economic development, leadership, family development (including teen family development), health and wellness, senior community service, and racial justice and civil rights.

Programs are curriculum-based and outcome-centered, and we sustain active service partnerships and referral channels throughout our respective communities. In fact, YWCA chapters collectively partner and collaborate with over 45 school districts and alternative schools

statewide for programming and after school care. Finally, we provide a variety of educational opportunities for youth as part of wrap-around services.

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.

The requested funds would be a line-item appropriation in TANF Block Grant funding, which will not cost the state any General Revenue Funds as it is an allocation of federal pass-through dollars.

The Governor's proposed budget was a great start to emphasizing the resources to be devoted to areas in social services to protect the most vulnerable Ohioans in Am.Sub.H.B.33. The House-passed version is an improvement to the bill from because it demonstrates a clear commitment to support programming in organizations such as ours that are also on the front lines to address those we serve. The bill's current funding is consistent with that priority.

Chair Dolan, we urge the committee to favorably consider the bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.