



1855 E. Dublin-Granville Road, Suite 301
Columbus, Ohio 43229
Phone: 614-781-9651
www.odvn.org

**Maria York, Policy Director
Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Senate Finance Committee
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Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Maria York, and I am the Policy Director for the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is Ohio's federally designated domestic violence coalition, representing 76 local domestic violence organizations throughout the state. We appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for HB 33. We are incredibly grateful to Attorney General Yost, Governor DeWine, and members of the House and Senate for including domestic violence programs (GRF 055504) in the FY 24-25 budget at our request for \$20 million.

The need for emergency shelter and supportive services for Ohio families struggling with domestic violence is greater now than ever before. Nearly 1 out of every 4 adult Ohioans reported experiencing domestic violence in their lifetime.¹ Similarly, nearly 1 in 4 children in Ohio is exposed to domestic violence in their home.² For calendar year 2022, ODVN's 76 member programs³:

- Sheltered 9,886 survivors (approximately 5,594 adults and 4,292 children) who spent 487,253 nights in emergency shelters. However, 5,681 survivors seeking shelter -- more than 36% -- were turned away because of insufficient capacity.
- Provided services to 72,920 people, most of whom never spent a night in shelter. Nineteen percent (19%) of our programs were unable to meet the need for support groups, transportation and other supportive services.
- Answered 90,751 crisis calls.⁴ More than one fifth (23%) of our programs said they were unable to answer crisis calls consistently because they didn't have enough staff.

¹ Health Policy Institute of Ohio. (2020). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Health impact of ACEs in Ohio. Available from [HPIO ACEs brief](#).

² The HealthPath Foundation of Ohio (2017). Impact of Domestic Violence Exposure: Recommendations to Better Serve Ohio's Children. Cincinnati, OH. Available from [The HealthPath Foundation of Ohio](#).

³ The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) surveyed its 76 member programs January 5 to 27, 2023 about the prevalence of domestic violence. A total of 74 programs responded, a 97% response rate.

⁴ Additionally, 42 programs have the capacity to handle crisis communications through text and/or webchat.

ODVN's member programs have experienced service reductions since 2019, when federal funding was reduced by about 60%. More than 40% of our programs reported **reducing or eliminating services to children**. More than one quarter (27%) of our programs turned away survivors seeking assistance with a protection order or court advocacy, due to no available staff. That means domestic violence survivors often must try to navigate the complicated legal system including attending hearings where their abusers are present – without an advocate's support.

The \$10 million annual allocation in the state budget will potentially save lives, by reducing the number of domestic violence survivors and their children who are turned away from emergency shelter services. Adult and child domestic violence victims depend on our emergency shelters and life-saving services when they are in crisis. The funds will also expand programs' capacity to communicate urgent information with survivors through web chats and texts. Currently, only 41% of our programs have texting capacity and only 35% of programs have web chat capacity. The funds will begin to address the deficits in youth, legal and prevention services.

Funding domestic violence programming is a good investment in Ohio's communities and will save taxpayer dollars. By providing emergency shelter, ODVN member programs collectively saved Ohio communities **more than \$32 million** in short-term costs associated with medical care, property damage, law enforcement, emergency response, child protective services, legal fees, and loss of life including end-of-life expenses.⁵ Where do all of those providers send survivors to get safe and keep their children safe? Our shelters. Without proper funding for domestic violence programs, those same service providers and law enforcement agencies lose a necessary partner to keep families safe.

On a per-capita basis, Ohio is **LAST** in funding domestic violence services compared to all surrounding funded states. Even when increased to the amount in the House bill, Ohio will still come in last at 85 cents per capita. Compare that to our surrounding states, 92 cents in Indiana, \$1.41 in West Virginia, \$1.56 in Pennsylvania, and \$2.54 in Kentucky.

Adult and child domestic violence victims depend on our emergency shelters and life-saving services when they are in crisis. Your communities are relying on your support to keep families safe. We ask that you continue to support domestic violence victims and their children by providing a stable funding source for local domestic violence programs so they can begin to meet the need in their communities and provide the same resources that Ohio's surrounding states are providing to victims.

⁵ In spring 2022, ODVN engaged a third-party research firm, Measurement Resources Company (MRC), to calculate the impact and estimated social return on investment (ESROI) of domestic violence shelters. For more information: [Social Return on Investment 2021](#)