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**Maria York, Policy Director
Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Senate Financial Institutions and Technology Committee
Written Proponent Testimony on SB 50
March 21, 2023**

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman Hackett, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Financial Institutions and Technology 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 shelters and programs throughout the state.

ODVN appreciates the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony on SB 50. We are especially supportive of two important provisions of this bill: the upgrade to voice and integrated text-to-9-1-1 from traditional and new devices and improved access to a caller's location. This technology upgrade is sorely needed and, in fact, our shelters and member programs are also facing a similar need while providing emergency services to domestic violence victims and their children.

In calendar year 2022, ODVN's 76 member programs sheltered 9,886 survivors (approximately 5,594 adults and 4,292 children) who spent 487,253 nights in emergency shelters.¹ They also answered 90,751 crisis calls. Our programs are recognizing the growing need for upgrading communication methods themselves, but only 41% of our programs have texting capacity and only 35% have web chat capacity.

Ohio families struggling with domestic violence need improved access to life-saving emergency services. GPS combined with other technologies, such as emergency response systems and cellular telephones, have the potential to save lives.² Given that nearly 1 out of every 4 adult Ohioans reported experiencing domestic violence in their lifetime³ and nearly 1 in 4 children in Ohio is exposed to domestic violence in their home,⁴ the need for upgraded and accessible emergency services is greater now than ever before.

In a recent survey of over 500 domestic violence survivors in Ohio, a total of 60% of survey participants called the police regarding their most recent incident of domestic violence, and 91% had called the police for help in the past.⁵ Forty-one (41%) reported calling the police for help more than three times; 10% had called the

¹ 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.

² The Double-Edged Sword: An Examination of the Global Positioning System, Enhanced 911, and the Internet and Their Relationships to the Lives of Domestic Violence Victims and Their Abusers. (2004). Available from [The Double Edged Sword: An Examination of the Global Positioning System, Enhanced 911, and the Internet and Their Relationships to the Lives of Domestic Violence Victims and Their Abusers \(buffalo.edu\)](http://buffalo.edu)

³ Health Policy Institute of Ohio. (2020). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Health impact of ACEs in Ohio. Available from [HPIO ACEs brief](http://hpio.org).

⁴ 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](http://thehealthpath.org).

⁵ Seeking Safety, Equity, and Justice. (2021). Ohio Statewide Survey Results: Domestic Violence Survivors; Experiences with Law Enforcement, Courts, Child Welfare, and Social Service Systems. https://www.odvn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Seeking_Safety_Equity_and_Justice_Appendices.pdf. Accessed March 2023.

police more than seven times.⁶ One of the most compelling findings from the survey came from Deaf+ survivors, who described the negative impacts they experienced by not having appropriate language access when they called 911. Twenty-two respondents or about 5% of the respondents were Deaf+, but only one of them reported being provided an interpreter when they called the police.⁷ Without texting options to 911, Deaf+ victims are forced to use a TTY or relay service, which is older technology, more time consuming, and, in the event of an emergency, can take longer to get help. The Next Generation 911 system offers great promise for people who are deaf and hard of hearing and allows them to directly access emergency assistance from a 911 call center by using their preferred mode of communication, whether by video, text, instant messaging, or other means.⁸

On behalf of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network and its 76 member programs, I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to share our support for SB 50. Our domestic violence programs across the state work with law enforcement and dispatch to assist victims of domestic violence every day. It is for these adult and child victims that we welcome and support measures like SB 50 that remove barriers to life-saving communication and emergency response for victims.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Access to Emergency Services. (2019). Available from [National Association of the Deaf - NAD](#)