



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Statewide Anti-Violence Coalition Thanks the Ohio House for Increased Rape Crisis Services Funding**

Yesterday, the Ohio House of Representatives approved an increased budget for the Ohio Rape Crisis Centers line item ("Line Item"), taking it from \$4.75 million per fiscal year in 2019 to \$7.3 million per fiscal year in 2021.

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) has advocated heavily for this sizeable increase, which was necessary in order to respond to increased demand for services as well as to position Ohio's 35 rape crisis programs to expand services to cover all 88 counties of the state. The statewide training and technical assistance provider said this increase will change the landscape of rape crisis services in our state and will positively impact the lives of thousands of Ohioans. The group now respectfully asks the Ohio Senate to build on this increase in their upcoming hearings.

Ohio has just 35 rape crisis centers tasked with providing 24/7 crisis hotline response and emergency room advocacy, legal advocacy, prevention education and other life-saving services across the entire state. In 2020, these programs lost over \$8.3 million per fiscal year in operating expenses. They had to cut staff and leave open positions vacant, all while fielding a 50% increase in the monthly rate of survivors receiving advocacy and a 34% increase in the monthly rate of hotline calls.

"We are so grateful to our champions in the Ohio House of Representatives for their diligence in pursuing an increase to the Rape Crisis Centers Line Item. The House has acted in the best interest of the 1 in 5 people who are impacted by sexual violence," said Camille Crary, Director of Legal Services and Public Policy at OAESV.

Before 2014, Ohio survivors could access rape crisis services in less than half of Ohio's 88 counties. Programs serving these counties operated heavily on federal grants, and the vast majority of federal grants restrict funding to the creation or maintenance of new positions and heavily regulate the tasks those grants will support. This, along with federal funding reductions of more than 25% in 2020 and nearly 40% in 2021, left Ohio rape crisis programs without a dependable funding stream to cover costs associated with keeping their doors open.

To expand service accessibility across counties, and to increase the financial stability of Ohio's existing rape crisis programs, OAESV worked diligently with Ohio legislators and the Attorney General's office to create the Ohio Rape Crisis Centers budget line item. Under the Line Item, programs that meet the Core Standards are eligible for unrestricted funds. The Line Item's positive impact has been swift and powerful. For instance, many programs were able to extend their services to cover additional counties, increase employment, and create prevention programming.

As counties providing services have increased since 2014, so have reports of sexual violence to law enforcement. This is just one way that the Line Item has demonstrated a tangible and impressive impact since it was first introduced.

Now, the increased demand for survivor services and prevention work, and the gap in funding left after federal cuts, will further be met with this impactful increase in Line Item funds. "OAESV is so thankful that members of the Ohio House have made this decision to support survivors in Ohio and the advocates who serve them and to help put an end to sexual violence in our state," says the group's Executive Director, Rosa Beltré. "Without this increase, rape crisis centers will cease to exist in half of our current service areas. We now respectfully call on the Senate to continue this support and solidify this increase for the Governor's signature."

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence will continue their advocacy efforts at their upcoming Advocacy Day, taking place on April 20th at the Ohio Statehouse. The yearly event is focused on engagement and discussion between Ohio lawmakers and their constituents who are passionate about ending sexual violence, and it draws survivors of sexual violence, professionals, and volunteers from all around Ohio.

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*Interviews available upon request.*

*As Ohio's statewide coalition, OAESV advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.*