

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ohio Anti-Sexual Violence Coalition Thanks Lawmakers for Historic Investment in Rape Crisis Services

Over the holiday weekend, Ohio legislators approved an increase to the Ohio Rape Crisis Centers line item (“Line Item”) in the Ohio Operating Budget for FY 2024-2025. This increase takes the Line Item from \$7.3 million and \$10 million per fiscal year in 2021-2022 respectively to \$15 million per fiscal year in 2023-2024. Yesterday, the budget was signed by Governor DeWine.

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) commends the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives for reflecting their commitment to survivors of sexual violence in the final budget. The Line Item increase will offer crucial support for local community-based rape crisis programs that provide 24/7 crisis hotline response and medical advocacy, legal advocacy, prevention education, and more.

OAESV’s President & CEO, Rosa Beltré, uplifts the approval: “The budget approval of 15 million annually for Rape Crisis Funds speaks volumes of the tenacity, strength, and collective power of OAESV as the statewide coalition elevating the voices for all, as well as the unwavering commitment of this administration and legislators to support survivors of sexual violence in all 88 counties and the accredited 35 rape crisis centers around the state. Sexual violence is a bipartisan issue, no one is exempt, and we are grateful our lawmakers have understood that. There is power and strength in the collective; we are all part of the solution to eradicate sexual violence in our state.”

In partnership with its over 35 rape crisis member programs throughout Ohio, OAESV has advocated for this increase to address federal funding shortfalls and expand the reach of sexual assault services and prevention throughout the state. Emily Gemar, OAESV’s Director of Public Policy, has spent the past ten months working with lawmakers and rape crisis programs to demonstrate how reduced federal funding, insufficient staffing and retention barriers, and increased demand for services can be mitigated by increased state funding to allow the continued flow of services to our local communities.

Gemar notes, “Advocates in local programs show up every day to support survivors in our local communities. Their advocacy helps to keep our communities safe, but they can’t do it all – especially without the funding to keep centers staffed to meet the rising need. These funds will assist our programs in maintaining essential services at a time when people need it most.”

This historic investment in sexual assault services comes at a critical time for Ohio’s rape crisis centers, says Beltré, adding that “the hard cuts of VOCA funds in the state of Ohio for the past three years has been a hit on the way our agencies can truly sustain programming and advocacy for sexual violence survivors.”

Despite efforts to fix Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding at the federal level, the largest funding source for Ohio’s programs, further cuts are expected in the near future. The increased funding will not only help to reduce the impact of further VOCA cuts; it will also help rape crisis programs reduce existing barriers to services for survivors.

OAESV extends our deep gratitude to all who added their voice to this collective effort.

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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.