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250+ Advocates, Survivors Convene at Ohio Statehouse to Advance Sexual Violence Policy Priorities

COLUMBUS, Ohio (April 15, 2026) — More than 250 survivors, advocates, prevention professionals, and community members from across Ohio gathered at the Ohio Statehouse Tuesday for Advocacy Day, hosted by the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Participants took part in a morning program featuring survivor voices, policy discussions, and the release of new statewide data on sexual violence and service needs. In the afternoon, attendees held 98 meetings with legislators to discuss six key policy priorities, including Ohio’s civil statute of limitations, the Ohio Safe Homes Act, and House Bill 723.

“In Ohio, we are seeing attempts to roll things back, to create barriers, to silence voices, to make this work harder than it already is,” said Rosa Beltré, CEO of OAESV. “But let me say this clearly and unapologetically: the moment is now, and we are not leaving.”

Advocates and lawmakers highlighted the need for policies that remove barriers to safety and justice for survivors.

“By maintaining a one-year statute of limitations, we are not creating efficiency — we’re creating exclusion,” said State Senator Nickie Antonio. “We’re effectively telling survivors if you can’t come forward quickly enough, your access to justice just expired. That’s not a trauma-informed system.”

“Too often, survivors of sexual violence are forced to remain in an unsafe living situation because they cannot afford to break a lease or are unable to secure immediate safety measures,” said Amy Bleser, Chief Operating Officer of Women Helping Women in Cincinnati. “[The Ohio Safe Homes Act] is about removing barriers, creating options, and recognizing that safety should never come with financial penalties.”

New data shared at the event underscored the growing needs facing survivors and the programs that serve them.

“Survivors are increasingly forced to prioritize basic survival, such as safe housing, food, and transportation, before they can even begin to focus on healing,” said Caitlin Burke, Senior Director of Prevention & Impact at OAESV. “Rape crisis centers across the state have reported that housing insecurity has emerged as the most urgent unmet need.”

Advocacy Day brought together participants from across Ohio to elevate survivor voices, strengthen prevention efforts, and engage directly with lawmakers on policies impacting communities statewide.

Photos and video from the event are available on request.

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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.