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ODVN statement on Gov. DeWine's budget allocation for domestic violence programs

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Feb. 1, 2023) – Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine took a crucial step to ensure that survivors of domestic violence get the help and support they need, by including \$20 million for domestic violence services in the next two-year budget.

"To his credit, Gov. DeWine put the needs of domestic violence first," said Mary O'Doherty, executive director of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN). "His FY24-25 budget acknowledges the tremendous challenges our member programs face as they deal with increased demands for services after years of federal budget cuts."

Currently, at least one in five survivors who seeks help at an Ohio domestic violence shelter is turned away, because there's not sufficient funding to provide services. In the fiscal year that ended last June, 112 people died in domestic violence incidents in Ohio – including 22 children, six of whom were babies, according to ODVN's most recent annual fatality report.

The funding is the only general revenue support for the state's 76 shelters operating across the state. The programs, which include 58 residential shelters and 18 non-residential programs, provide emergency shelter, court accompaniment, legal advocacy and other services to survivors of intimate partner abuse and their children.

The current biennial budget provides just \$7.5 million for those services, at a time when federal funding through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program has been cut by more than 70% since 2019.

Currently, Ohio ranks well below the surrounding states for the per capita amount it spends on domestic violence services – spending only 32 cents per capita, compared to \$1.41 per capita in West Virginia, \$1.56 per capita in Pennsylvania and \$2.54 per capita in Kentucky.

In December, DeWine signed into law a significant criminal justice bill including a provision making strangulation a felony, rather than a misdemeanor, in Ohio – something advocates for domestic violence reform had been pushing for years. Now, the new two-year budget DeWine presented this week would continue to strengthen protection for survivors of domestic violence, which impacts people from all ages, income groups and parts of the state.

In 2021, ODVN's member programs provided services to 80,706 survivors of domestic violence, including 7,793 children, and answered nearly 126,000 crisis calls.

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