



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Economic Forecast Brighter for Ohio's Domestic Violence Victims: Allstate Foundation Makes \$50k Grant; House Passes HB 167**

*Columbus, Ohio* – Two bright spots dot the otherwise bleak financial landscape for domestic violence survivors in Ohio. First, the Allstate Foundation has provided a \$50,000 grant to the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) to help remove financial barriers for survivors of domestic violence. The grant will support efforts in four Ohio communities: Alliance, Batavia, Bowling Green, and Toledo, and will also create a matched savings program for individual domestic violence survivors. Second, the Ohio House passed HB 167, a bill that would provide much overdue protections in the employment and housing areas for domestic violence victims. The bill now moves to the Ohio Senate.

Many domestic violence victims encounter significant economic barriers to escaping violent partners including the costs of leaving, the risks of losing employment, and getting evicted, among others. Currently in Ohio, employees can legally be fired solely because of their status as victims, they can be refused even *unpaid* leave to attend court hearings or seek emergency medical treatment, and they are not entitled to have their locks changed or to terminate leases, even when it is unsafe for them to remain in their homes. Also, many abusive partners engage in financial abuse, including things like hiding or controlling money, ruining the victim's credit, or refusing to pay child support. In the context of a difficult economy, the cumulative effects of these barriers create huge setbacks in many victims' attempts to rebuild lives free of violence.

The "*Economic Opportunities for Safety, Survival and Security*" project funded by the Allstate Foundation will focus on financial planning, credit repair, and job opportunities, and will be coordinated by ODVN in partnership with four domestic violence programs in Alliance, Batavia, Bowling Green and Toledo. The funds will support financial literacy education, case management, job readiness efforts, financial planning, credit repair and a matched savings program. "The Allstate Foundation grant will support local economic advocacy and will create a first-of-its-kind matched savings program for survivors in Ohio," said Nancy Neylon, Executive Director of the ODVN. "A survey we did earlier this year confirmed the unprecedented financial obstacles facing domestic violence survivors in Ohio. This help from the Allstate Foundation couldn't have come at a better time," she added. The Allstate Foundation's *Economics Against Abuse* program has provided more than \$12 million in funding to national and state domestic violence organizations since 2005.

**HB 167**, on the other hand, will prohibit terminating employees solely because they are victims, will provide for limited unpaid leave for things such as court hearings and emergency medical treatment, will require landlords to change locks at the victim's request (and at the victim's expense), and will allow victims to terminate leases under certain circumstances. Neylon agreed with HB 167 bill sponsor Representative Dennis Murray's comment in his floor speech when he said, "It is almost as if though whole world is conspiring against victims when we should be working to support them." Neylon noted that, "As long as victims have no protections in the areas of employment and housing, their chances of successfully getting safe are compromised." Ohio would join at least 26 other states with housing protections and at least 15 others which have employment protections for victims.

Put simply, the Allstate Foundation grant will increase the ability of domestic violence survivors in Ohio to get jobs and housing, and the passage of HB 167 from the House increases the chances that Ohio law will someday make it harder for victims to lose their jobs and housing.

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For more information on the project or to schedule an interview, please contact:

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