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### ***Serious Funding Cuts Threaten Ohio's Domestic Violence Programs***

#### ***Increase in State Funding Needed to Preserve Vital Services***

**COLUMBUS**, Ohio (Sept. 25, 2020) – Most of Ohio's domestic violence programs are preparing for staff and service reductions after learning this week that a core funding source would be cut by nearly a third.

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants, administered by the Office of the Attorney General, are the largest funding source for most of Ohio's domestic violence programs. The grants pay for shelter operations, hotline and shelter staff, court-based and housing advocates, children's and other vital service.

Ohio's VOCA allocation was cut by more than \$20 million from FY20 to FY21. Grants to more than 50 DV programs will be cut by about \$7.7 million for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

The VOCA cuts spotlight the need for an increase in state support for Ohio's shelters. Last year, at the urging of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN), the General Assembly included \$1 million to fund shelter operations annually. ODVN and its programs are advocating for an increase to \$5 million annually.

"ODVN greatly appreciates the \$1 million in funding legislators provided last year," ODVN Executive Director Mary O'Doherty said. "But our programs desperately need a more generous, stable funding source – one they can count on every year. These VOCA cuts demonstrate how important that is."

In 2019 ODVN's member programs -- 75 domestic violence shelter and community-based programs -- served more than 81,369 individuals, including 12,282 children. More than 9,000 of those victims and children were provided safe shelter. Domestic violence programs answered 97,667 crisis calls last year.

Ohio's programs turned away 263 victims in a single day in 2019 because they lacked room to serve them, according to the National Network to End Domestic Violence's 24-hour census survey, which included responses from all of Ohio's residential programs.

Without a strong increase in the line item measure, the new VOCA cuts will create an even more serious and dangerous void in services for victims.

Such an increase would bring Ohio's support for DV programs closer in line with other states in the region although most surrounding states provide more support on a per capita basis.

The VOCA cuts are the result of declining deposits into VOCA's non-taxpayer funding source, the Crime Victims Fund. The fund, which is funded with fines from white collar prosecutions, has declined significantly since 2017 due to changing prosecutorial strategies.

ODVN has been advocating for a legislative fix that would direct penalties and fines from non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements into the CVF. The CVF would then be sustained with no burden to taxpayers. ODVN and other crime victim advocates have advocated for inclusion of this fix in the next federal COVID-19 relief package.

**About the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN):** ODVN provides a strong statewide voice for Ohio's domestic violence programs that serve all 88 counties, and advocates on domestic violence-related issues at the state and federal level. ODVN runs a training institute for advocates and allies that trained 4,451 individuals last year, a legal assistance program that serves close to 700 survivors annually, a relocation program that served 529 survivors and 739 children last year, and a statewide prevention program.

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