

Wage equity and other worker supports in Ohio: How one coalition is getting started on a new domestic violence prevention strategy

Practitioners and Advocates Featured:

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The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) believes that ending gender-based violence requires a collective voice for social and systemic change. Interested in improving economic supports for women and families, a recommended best practice for domestic violence prevention, ODVN is working with the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network (WPPN) to collaboratively advance economic security in the state. These two networks and their partners are building an understanding of and advocating for wage equity and other worker supports in the state.

MAKING THE CONNECTION: WAGE INEQUITIES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OHIO

ODVN has done some deep thinking on how economic opportunity connects to health and safety. They found that close to a quarter of children live in poverty in the state and maternal and infant mortality is high for people of color, especially Black women and babies, who experience rates worse than most developing countries. ODVN recognizes poverty as a social determinant of health that is associated with higher rates of multiple forms of violence, and that wages in Ohio have been suppressed since the late 1970s for all workers. With this understanding, ODVN became interested in what raising wages could do for low wage workers to improve their economic self-sufficiency.

The network sees connections between individuals' economic security and community conditions that may play a role in preventing violence. For example, when someone working multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet lives in a community where many others are facing similar circumstances, it can affect community dynamics. ODVN believes that wage equity and other worker supports can help Ohioans dedicate energy and resources to invest in their communities

which will increase community cohesion, a protective factor for safe relationships. Ultimately, the network sees equitable employment and worker supports like paid time off, as supportive of protective factors like employment and community cohesion that may reduce domestic and sexual violence and infant mortality. This strategy may also help decrease harmful gender norms that contribute to gender-based violence by supporting gender pay equity.

NAVIGATING ADVOCACY WORK WITH A FEDERAL GRANT

ODVN initially wanted to work on building “a bigger tent” of advocates to support an increase in the minimum wage for the state. However, the federal funds they were using for their prevention work could not be used to directly support a statewide ballot initiative, as that would be categorized as lobbying. Instead, with support from their program officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), they took a step back to consider what type of policy work could be done using federal dollars. ODVN decided to instead focus on building a broad understanding of economic supports for low wage workers, through supporting sustainable living wages, paid time off and childcare benefits. They call this “little p” policy work, because instead of lobbying for state policy, they plan to expand partnerships engaged on these issues and educate partners and the public on the best available evidence on wage equity and other worker supports.

WORKING ON WAGE EQUITY AND OTHER WORKER SUPPORTS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

When ODVN started this work, they knew there were already several key partners engaged in improving economic supports for women and families, some of whom ODVN has interacted with informally in the past. ODVN has formed and now convenes a workgroup focused on wage equity and other worker supports (which they call “WOWs”). They started by bringing together the Ohio Women’s Public Policy Network, Policy Matters Ohio, and Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. The group has expanded to include the Women’s Fund of Central Ohio and Health Policy Institute of Ohio. The Leadership Team that provides high level oversight for the initiative has also grown to include members who represent underserved communities such as an organization that provides Doula services to black pregnant women and the National Council of Negro Women. Partnerships are likely to expand further as ODVN continues this prevention strategy.



Ohio Women’s Public Policy Network worked alongside lawmakers to help introduce a bill for Paid Family and Medical Leave for the first time in Ohio’s history in 2016.

Partnerships are critical to working on issues like poverty and wage inequities. For example, WPPN is a coalition that brings together more than 30 organizations to collaboratively advance policies that create economic security for women and strengthen Ohio families. Using a collective voice that represents the women of the state, the network works to ensure that public policy reflects

the true needs of women and families. They offer policy expertise and directly advocate for policies aligning with their coalition's shared economic security policy agenda at the local, state, and federal level. For example, WPPN worked alongside state lawmakers to help introduce a bill for Paid Family and Medical Leave in 2016. They have a wide-ranging set of policy goals related to promoting economic security for women and families, ensuring opportunity and fairness in the workplace, and improving women's health and well-being, with specific priorities associated with increasing minimum wages, increasing the affordability of childcare, ensuring pension protection, and increasing affordable housing.

ODVN hopes that by expanding partnerships, educating the public and other partners, and monitoring progress, their work will contribute to an increased understanding of wage equity and other worker supports. They are confident that with a greater understanding, partner organizations will increase their support in addressing the issue.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORKING TOGETHER ON WAGE EQUITY?

Partnerships between WPPN and ODVN's member agencies across the state build a larger network of support and can encourage cross-learning amongst the various organizations about how to best advance wage equity and other worker supports. Both ODVN and WPPN believe that integrating issue areas like violence, infant mortality, and poverty, rather than talking about each alone is the most productive and efficient way to move policy forward. Erin Ryan, Managing Director of the Ohio Women's Policy Network says, "We know that the issues that women face in our lives do not exist in separate silos, so doing policy and advocacy work in silos is detrimental to our progress." WPPN is trying to help people understand how a multitude of issues are interrelated and how policies related to living wages or paid leave, for example, can address and prevent the issues.



A convening of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network and the Center for American Progress. WPPN coordinates and facilitates advocacy efforts, including policies focused on promoting economic security.

Since 2002, Rebecca Cline has been the prevention programs director at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. During her tenure at ODVN, she has provided leadership for ODVN's DELTA Program, a local, state, and national CDC funded intimate partner violence prevention initiative, the Ohio Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Consortium, and the Ohio Men's Action Network. She currently lives in Medina with her husband and life partner, Dave and enjoys gardening and holistic health practices.

Erin Ryan is the managing director of the Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, a coalition of more than 30 organizations working collaboratively to advance policies that create economic security for women and strengthen families. She has years of experience in Ohio politics, working in fundraising and field operations for races. Ryan received her undergraduate degree in political science and women's, gender, and sexuality studies from The Ohio State University and currently resides in Columbus with her fiancé, Darren.

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RESOURCES

- [Ohio Women's Public Policy Network's policy agenda](#)
- [Women's Public Policy Network Resources](#)

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