

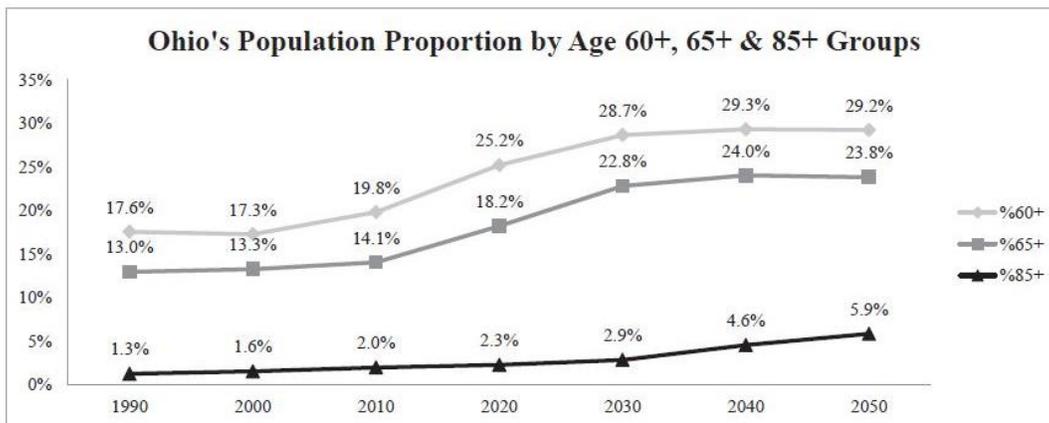


HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE
Testimony of Stephanie M. Loucka, Director, Ohio Department of Aging
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Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Health and Human Services subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Governor Kasich’s fourth Executive Budget and how it will positively impact Ohio’s elders and their families.

I would like to thank the General Assembly for its continued prioritization of services and supports for our elders and their families. Governor Kasich and I recognize and support these efforts to address the needs of, and create opportunities for, our aging population. The Department of Aging and the aging network stand ready to help make significant impacts in this work by changing the way we all think about age and aging, and offering elders the support they need while also providing meaningful ways to thrive and contribute.

Ohio currently has the sixth largest older adult (65-plus) population in the nation, and we are growing older. While our overall population is expected to grow two percent from 2010 to 2030, our 65-plus population will grow by 46 percent. By 2040, older adults will comprise 29.3 percent of our state’s population, compared to 19.8 percent in 2010.



Data Sources:
U.S. Census Data 1990, 2000 and 2010.
N. P. Ritchey, S. Mehdizadeh & T. Yamashita. (2012). Projections of Ohio's Population 2010-2030. Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University, Oxford, OH
[Website: www.ohio-population.org](http://www.ohio-population.org)

These statistics are sobering; however, we know that an aging population comes with many opportunities.

As the federally designated State Unit on Aging, the Department of Aging serves as the sole state agency to coordinate Older Americans Act programs and services, as well as other services to meet the needs of Ohio's elders. The structure of the Department is tied directly to its funding sources. We receive \$65 million in federal funding, primarily from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which supports services for older Ohioans as well as the administration of Medicaid funded services. We also apply for and use grants from federal and state sources to support and expand our work.

State and Local Leadership on Aging Issues

Governor Kasich has emphasized the role that communities and their leaders play in helping us solve some of our biggest problems statewide. At the Department of Aging, we've known the value of community leadership and partnership for decades through our work with Ohio's aging network. Accordingly, the Department provides guidance and leadership to Ohio's twelve area agencies on aging, which coordinate the design and delivery of services and supports to older adults and people with disabilities within their communities. They create regional plans based on local need and characteristics and advise local governments and businesses on designing plans, services and public spaces with elders' needs in mind.

As this administration has rebalanced long-term care in our state, we have also developed and fostered a laser focus on health, well-being, injury prevention and community engagement throughout the lifespan. The Department of Aging provides and promotes an array of state and local programs and services designed to support individuals in their own homes and encourage healthy and active aging among all Ohioans.

This Budget: GRF line items

With respect to state funding for the Department, the Senior Community Services line item represents the bulk of our GRF funding. Senior Community Services funds provide services to frail older adults at risk of institutionalization. Services enhance the quality of life and social interaction and reduce the effect of disability for homebound and active elders. Services include care coordination, homemaker and chore services, home-delivered meals, adult day services, personal care and assisted transportation.

In the Executive Budget, this line item is funded at approximately \$7.1 million, which allows the Department to fully leverage about \$45 million in federal funds. The money is distributed to the area agencies on aging and used for initiatives that help older individuals maximize independent living. This allows the agencies to utilize these funds based on local needs and consistent with the service system that works for their region. In the upcoming biennium, we will continue our focus on evidence-based or evidence-informed programs in target areas such as food insecurity, caregiver support, chronic disease prevention and management, and care transition interventions to avoid hospital re-admission.

A crucial GRF funding source to the Department is the Alzheimer's Respite line item. This line item leverages both federal and local funds to support services to help caregivers of people with dementia. Recognizing the need to continue to enhance support programs and resources for informal caregivers –

particularly working caregivers – that funding is held level at approximately \$2.5 million in this budget. The Alzheimer’s Respite program is administered with a person-centered focus. Core services include telephone and in-person support, care consultation, personal care and homemaker services, adult day services and more.

Statute Changes: State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

When family members are not able to provide the full range of care that an individual needs, they have options for care in a variety of settings. As consumers, they also have an advocate in the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Designated by federal and state law, the Office advocates for excellence in long-term services and supports wherever consumers live, including nursing homes, residential care facilities and in consumers’ homes through private pay and Medicaid programs like PASSPORT and MyCare Ohio. Ombudsman staff and volunteers work with consumers, providers and regulators to find mutually agreeable solutions and help consumers and their families understand their rights. In federal fiscal year 2016, the Ombudsman program received nearly 11,000 consumer complaints regarding care, services and other issues.

A number of statute changes in this budget bring the state’s ombudsman program into compliance with newly implemented federal regulations by clarifying the role of the ombudsman in investigations and enhancing consumer privacy. Funding for the Office from all traditional sources in this budget stays steady at approximately \$7 million in each of the next two fiscal years. However, in the special revenue lines, we propose to fund ombudsman outreach in MyCare Ohio regions. The executive budget includes a \$500,000 appropriation each fiscal year in response to the ombudsman’s office learning that, in the first two years of the demonstration, the percentage of nursing home residents opting out of full integration of their benefits was much higher than the general MyCare Ohio population. It is important to the Office of the Ombudsman and to the Department that consumers are making informed decisions about their own benefits.

Additionally, we continue to develop nursing home quality improvement projects, including efforts to improve person-centered staff engagement and reduce the use of antipsychotic medications for nursing home residents with dementia. These projects will be supported by the Resident Protection Fund, which is comprised of fines paid by nursing homes for regulatory violations.

Statute Changes: Long-Term Care

Because we know that most Ohioans would prefer to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, Ohio uses Medicaid waivers to provide care in home and community-based settings as an alternative to nursing home care. On behalf of the Ohio Department of Medicaid, the Department of Aging administers both the PASSPORT and Assisted Living statewide Medicaid waiver programs, as well as the PACE program, which serves Cuyahoga County. All three of these programs require participants to have a nursing facility level of care. PASSPORT and the Assisted Living Waiver also require Medicaid financial eligibility and provide long-term services and supports in home and community-based settings. PACE supports a range of care settings.

As Ohio continues to prioritize opportunities for individuals to age in place at home, development of the community-based long-term care continuum will increase access to non-institutional alternatives.

The Executive Budget adds language that gives the state flexibility to explore new venues for service delivery. Any changes to the service will require both rule and waiver amendments, which will include a robust stakeholder engagement process.

Another statute change involving long-term care moves from law to rule how the Director of the Department of Aging shall conduct long-term care consultations. Current law is very prescriptive on who receives long-term care consultations and when. Moving two items from statute to rule would provide more flexibility to meet the needs of those who seek services in this ever-changing landscape.

Additionally, the Executive Budget removes unnecessary language regarding the Choices Medicaid Waiver program, as those services are now included in the PASSPORT waiver.

BELTSS

Nursing facilities are an important part of the continuum of care. Quality care remains a priority and very often starts with the facility administrator. The Department of Aging serves as the fiscal agent for the Board of Executives of Long-Term Services and Supports (BELTSS). The Board issues approximately 100 new and 2,000 renewal nursing home administrator licenses each year, as well as investigates complaints against licensed administrators. BELTSS is completely fee-supported and receives no GRF funding. This Executive Budget clarifies the Board's authority regarding the collection and use of fees as well as expands the Board's tools to sanction licensees when necessary.

Conclusion

As we look ahead, the Department of Aging will continue to work toward improving the lives of Ohio's elders and ensure that our elders remain respected members of our communities. We know that we cannot meet the needs of our growing and changing aging population by simply doing the same things better. We must embrace change and build on our successes and new technologies. We will use the funding available to us from all sources and the authority granted to us by the governor and this legislature to keep our state on the leading edge of innovation and responsiveness to our growing aging population.

Thank you once again for allowing me to speak to you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.