

TESTIMONY BEFORE  
THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

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Presented by  
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Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about H.B. 49. My name is Duana Patton and I am the CEO of the Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging. AAA5 is located in Richland County and serves 9 counties in rural north central Ohio; Ashland, Crawford, Morrow, Marion, Knox, Richland, Seneca, Huron and Wyandot Counties.

For over 40 years, Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging have provided services and supports to seniors. My Area Agency administers a number of federal, state and locally funded programs serving thousands of individuals each year. We do not serve any counties represented in the MyCare Demonstration. We do provide care management services for the Ohio Home Care Waiver serving individuals under age 60, as well as services and supports for PASSPORT, Older Americans Act, a local levy, and a number of other grant funded programs.

Serving Ohio's most vulnerable seniors who are enrolled in the waiver programs is both challenging and rewarding. It is challenging in a sense that seniors are living longer, and they are becoming frailer as they age in place. Furthermore, the needs we see and address are far reaching beyond the individual. We like to say we wrap a hug around the individual we are serving. This hug is better known as care coordination. Effective care coordination is not just about the funding source; it is a group of committed individuals working to meet the needs of our consumers with an array of services.

In our PASSPORT program the case manager is the coordinator of long term services and supports. They carry out this role by taking a person center approach, which would include environment, activities of daily living, nutritional needs, transportation, and are often the consumer's support in listening and dealing with barriers to safe living.

Let me tell you a real story, one that could be the reality for an individual in any part of Ohio. Several months ago the Area Agency was contacted by a PASSPORT client whose gas had been turned off due to a major water leak in his house trailer and until the water issue was resolved, the gas could not safely be turned back on. This individual needed to be removed from the unsafe home without delay. Nursing home placement would have seemed like the simple solution, but this individual was not agreeable. You see, he had found a furnished

house trailer in the same park that he could move into if only he had a \$500 deposit. Our care coordination team went into action. I personally called the Executive Director of one of our partner agencies who was able to allocate funding to cover the \$500. Our case manager contacted the local EMS who was happy to come out within hours to move the individual, who was non-ambulatory. Finally, we reached out to a local church who arranged for few volunteers to move the individual's bed and personal belongings. All this was finalized in a matter of 48 hours, which we were able to do because we have the autonomy to assemble providers, other community-based organizations and local community members to serve our consumers. We have many stories like this. Our consumers are facing challenges with health, environment, sometimes family dynamics, finances, and have a fear of loose of independence. The fact that we have cultivated a strong provider base, have a network of community partners and a team that extends beyond just the case manager means we are able to successfully address cases like this all the time.

Our Agency is not alone. The other eleven Area Agencies have similar client dynamics and have the same ability and networks to address them. We often work together to ensure consumers' needs are met regardless of where they live. There are times when a PASSPORT client moves from one region to another. We are fortunate that the client can focus on their move to a new residence, while our

care coordinators seamlessly transfer the case to the new Area Agency. This transfer can occur within a day or two and many times, we are able to maintain the same providers and ensure uninterrupted service.

Our role in PASSPORT has allowed the Area Agencies to become strong and respected leaders within our communities. We are often invited to participate in or convene other community stakeholders to address important aging issues that impact our residents, economics and development. My Agency works with our local health systems, job and family services, public health, county commissioners, and other community based organizations, churches, institutions of higher education, local elected officials and many others to ensure aging issues are at the forefront of decisions and funding.

One thing we are most proud of at AAA5 is our facility located in Ontario. A former grocery store was donated to us and renovated with the support of businesses and individuals who support our mission, The new facility may be just bricks and mortar to some, but to us it is a place where people come for information, free health and wellness programs, a meal, a meeting or event, medical care, hospice care, Alzheimer's support, or a cup of coffee.

As you can see I am very proud of our Agency and passionate about being part of our local communities. I am concerned that removing PASSPORT and

Assisted Living from the Area Agencies, and instead creating a managed long term services and supports model that is unknown, has not been evaluated and could potentially adversely impact clients and providers and would most likely change the dynamics of how the Area Agencies care coordinate within their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.