

TESTIMONY

HB 49

HOUSE FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Statement of

Adrienne Bradley

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United Way of Summit County

90 North Prospect St. Akron, OH 44304

Submitted for the record

House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

March 21, 2017

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Adrienne Bradley. I am the Director of Bridges Summit County for United Way of Summit County in Akron, Ohio. I have been working with individuals in poverty for more than 8 years. I currently run a county wide poverty initiative that educates individuals on different socio-economic classes through workshops and also work with low income families to better

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assess their situation and build a plan to increase income and build assets. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of United Way of Summit County, and the Summit County Healthier Buckeye Council to ask for consideration of continued support for the Healthier Buckeye Pilot Program.

I have spent the last 8 months working on the HBC pilot. The opportunity of state support for this program has allowed us to implement innovative work within our communities and build cross sectoral relationships and efforts with crucial resources. This funding has allowed us to lay an extremely strong foundation around the work that needs to continue.

We have educated and trained hundreds of individuals over the last 8 months and over eight thousands individuals over the last 8 years. These individuals consist of professionals in all sectors and through our workshops they have drastically increased their understanding of poverty. These workshops communicate how to more effectively work with low income families. These workshops are extremely powerful in providing cultural competency related to understanding poverty and the information that is being taken away can and does permeate throughout an organization, company or school system in the form of better processes, policies and day to day interactions.

Over the last 8 months, we have graduated close to 200 low income individuals through our Getting Ahead program. These participants are tired, frustrated and discontent with the current situation they are in. I have had the opportunity to learn their struggles and witness those overcoming

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adversities. I have scrutinized the realities of poverty, generational poverty, and the working poor. We have examined what works, what needs to be changed, and observed the fragmentation that exists within and across systems in our community. This has provided insight that financial coaching and support is imperative to the success of these individuals. I cannot stress the importance of getting individuals back to working full time and financially empowered. When we do this we are not only breaking these poverty cycles, but we are empowering individuals to become prolific and valuable contributors to the community. HBC support will allow us to continue with empowerment opportunities to drive the needle on sustainable change that is actually scalable within any community.

We are asking for consideration to provide the same level of support for HBC as in the last budget - \$11.5M. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at today's hearing.