

Testimony to Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services
Marcy Williams, Executive Director
March 22, 2017

Good afternoon, Chair Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Marcy Williams, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Non-Profit Organizations (OANO). Our statewide organization represents the non-profit sector here in Ohio, which accounts for a significant portion of our state. We are the fourth largest industry in the state based on employment, with these employees earning over \$20.1 billion in wages in 2013.

OANO provides our members with great benefits and resources—our mission is to provide leadership, education and advocacy to enhance the ability of Ohio’s nonprofits to serve their communities. One of the programs that we are most proud of is the Standards for Excellence Program (Standards). In short, this is an accreditation program for the non-profit world and has honestly changed the platform for many of the non-profit organizations we work with. As with other accreditation programs, the Standards aim to better those non-profits that go through this process from the inside out. However, I believe this accreditation goes so much farther. Every aspect of the organization is fully analyzed and vetted—from human resource policies to auditing practices to board governance. Policies that may have been overlooked or undervalued before are considered for their efficiencies and effectiveness. At the end of the process, which could take anywhere from three months to a few years, an organization that earns its Standards for Excellence Seal is truly one that has been thoroughly vetted for full legal and financial compliance and overall best practices.

In today’s world, it is more important than ever to ensure that the non-profits that are receiving taxpayer dollars or private donations are transparent in practice. The Standards accreditation ensures just this, and it is a vetting system that safeguards against fraudulent activity and mismanagement. From the administrative perspective, we have seen first-hand the transformation in organizations that have gone through the Standards program. These organizations have gone that extra step in illustrating a commitment to excellence in service and practice, and we know that the dollars we invest with these organizations are truly being put to optimal use.

However, we are a non-profit ourselves and recognize the tight margins in which our members operate. Many of the small organizations are dedicated to serving those most vulnerable and haven’t carved out funds to put themselves through the Standards for Excellence Program. While minimal in the eyes of a state budget, \$50,000 can make a significant impact in providing scholarships for non-profits around the state to become accredited. Specifically, twenty-four organizations from six regions in Ohio would be given a scholarship to go through the Standards program. These organizations will work together as a class to earn the top level accreditation, coming out stronger, more transparent and the most efficient as possible.

Many of the non-profits in your own districts recognize the benefits of becoming accredited and have expressed interest in the Standards series. Letters of support and supplemental written testimony have also been sent to your offices. Please support this funding request- our first ever- to give back to the non-profits that give so much to us.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.