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Foundation for Appalachian Ohio
House Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services
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Chair Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Megan Wanczyk and I serve as the Vice President of Communications and Programs for the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio (FAO). Headquartered in Nelsonville, the Foundation serves all 32 counties of Appalachian Ohio with the mission of creating opportunities for our region's citizens and communities by inspiring and supporting philanthropy.

In partnership with individuals, organizations, and businesses that are investing in our region through the Foundation, we award funds, forge partnerships, and convene leaders and communities around matters of importance for our region. Central to this work, the Foundation makes grants to nonprofit organizations in our region that are on the frontlines of addressing our region's most pressing needs and pursuing new opportunities that will impact generational poverty. Because we want to make sure our grant investments have the greatest impact, we understand the importance of nonprofits operating at their greatest capacity. OANO's Standards of Excellence program helps them do just that.

OANO provides a number of resources and tools for the nonprofit sector. Their Standards for Excellence Program—often referred to as the “Standards”—is very simply a voluntary accreditation for the nonprofit world. As straightforward as this may seem, the process to get fully accredited and sealed by the Standards council is nothing short of transformative. A full, thorough review of every aspect of the nonprofit organization is done, ensuring that an organization is not just legally compliant, but adhering to all best practices from human resources and board governance to financial auditing. The Standards seal truly means something at the end of this lengthy and rigorous process.

FAO believed so strongly in the start of this effort that we were a partner when OANO was launching its Standards of Excellence program. With funding to support workshops with OANO for nonprofit organizations across our region, FAO showed our support for both a comprehensive set of standards to help nonprofits while also helping some of our most powerful community partners, nonprofits, access the opportunity to benefit from this learning opportunity.

While the nonprofits in our region range from those serving our citizens with developmental disabilities to those making sure our children have healthy food, what we all know is so important for all nonprofits is to operate in alignment with best practices. It's vital so that they can best meet their missions, which are central to the success and prosperity of our communities. It's also essential so that all of us investing in our region's nonprofits – individual donors, foundations like FAO, and others – can be assured that every dollar is being wisely invested in these missions.

The Standards for Excellence are so important for our field and for the nonprofits in our region that FAO is writing to encourage your support for \$50,000 from the General Revenue Fund – administered through ODJFS – for a Standards for Excellence Scholarship Program. This will allow 24 nonprofits from six sectors of the state to become fully accredited. In the world of nonprofits, the cost to attend the required clinic series is often challenging to fit within the budgets these organizations are trying to devote so fully to their missions. This scholarship would be aimed at organizations that could truly benefit from this program, but possibly cannot afford it.

With support to the Standards for Excellence Scholarship Program, we will see nonprofits becoming stronger, more viable organizations that can better serve their missions. And we will also see the continued development of safeguards for the State and the many charitable donors in Ohio who can have a third-party vetting system to check on the operations of a particular nonprofit; and these nonprofits will be more poised than ever to apply for and receive grants from other funding sources. As a foundation ourselves, we can speak to the power of knowing a nonprofit is operating with the highest standards.

I urge your support for a sector that continues to give so much back to our great state and those living in it. With more tools and resources to help nonprofits more powerfully meet their missions, we will all see our citizens and communities benefit from more opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration.