



**Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging**

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Finance Committee  
Health and Human Services Subcommittee  
March 23, 2017**

**Respectively Submitted By:**

**Frank Weglarz, Volunteer  
Lake County Council on Aging**

*On behalf of:*

**Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging  
925 Euclid Avenue, Suite 550  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115  
216-621-0303**

Thank you Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services for the opportunity to testify before you in support of the Senior Community Services Block Grant (ALI 490-411).

My name is Frank Weglarz. I am a volunteer with the Lake County Council on Aging and, for the past two years, I delivered meals to the frail, homebound elderly. I am advocating for an increase in the Senior Community Services Block Grant to at least the 2001 level or \$15 million a year. The Senior Community Services Block Grant funds services that enable older adults to remain living in their homes for as long as possible, rather than a more expensive alternative such as a nursing home. These funds support services such as home delivered meals, transportation, and personal care services.

In the Ohio Department on Aging's budget, the Senior Community Services Block Grant has been cut over 50% since 2001, yet the aging population has steadily increased year after year. By 2030, adults 65 years and older will make up nearly 25% of Ohio's population. As a volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program, I am concerned about food insecurity among older adults. According to a study, *The State of Senior Hunger in America 2014*, Ohio ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the nation and first in the Midwest for seniors 60 and older who are food insecure. Services such as home delivered meals help address this issue by delivering a hot meal five days a week to the elderly. In Lake County, nearly 140,000 meals were delivered and nearly 34,000 congregate meals served in 2016 averaging around 700 meals a day, with a waiting list of up to 25 in any given month. We also provide ready-to-eat meals for the weekend and hot holiday meals to those who request them. Additionally, the meal delivery provides a critical safety and wellness check important to those who are isolated. All drivers are required to see and talk with our clients when meals are delivered. Sometimes we are the only personal contact they receive each day. One of my clients, Elisabeth, who is 82, wasn't feeling well and wasn't eating. When I arrived she asked me to place her food in the refrigerator. I noticed she hadn't eaten the last 2 days meals. I asked why she hadn't eaten and she said she was tired of being sick. She seemed depressed and lonely. I notified the meal site who contacted her social worker and family. The Lake County Council on Aging also recruited a volunteer

(who is an area teacher) to come and visit Elizabeth. Her family is now aware of her situation and she seems happier and is eating. We even joke whenever I bring her meals. I have another client who used to deliver meals and now he and his wife are in need of our service. They both have mobility problems. I bring their meals into their home and set them up on their kitchen counter. I always ask how they are doing. We chat for a minute or two about the weather or his past service to home delivery meal program. It feels good to help people who volunteered to serve others and now need help themselves. I'm sure that all of our volunteer drivers have similar stories and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the seniors in my community.

Thank you members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of an increase in the Senior Community Services Block Grant on behalf of Ohio's seniors.