

**Testimony of Barbara Riley, Chair, Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition  
Thursday, June 15, 2017  
Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear again before you today in regard to Sub. HB 49. I am Barbara Riley, Chair of the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition, a group of seniors and their caregivers who have come together to make certain that the voice of Ohio's seniors is heard in the development of public policy affecting our growing older adult population. I want to acknowledge the difficulties you face as you work to balance this biennial budget, but I believe it is important to do so in ways that do not increase costs in future biennia for the care of frail seniors because of our lack of providing services today. The following outlines our appreciation and concerns regarding the current substitute bill.

- **The Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition appreciates this Committee's support for the earmark in ODJFS's budget that will provide additional child care funding for those who are Kinship Caregivers as this directly addresses some of the challenges of grandparents raising grandchildren.**
- **In addition, the Coalition thanks you for your removal of the moratorium on rate increases for Assisted Living and Personal Care Assistance.**  
That rate reimbursement freeze would have significantly adversely affected the quality of direct care seniors receive.
- **We also were pleased to see that you have retained a delay in the implementation of Managed Long-Term Services and Supports.**  
Our Coalition does not oppose the melded management of acute care and LTSS, but we are very concerned that it be done in a thoughtful way, including the input of seniors and their caregivers. We believe there has been a false sense of urgency for moving this forward; rather we recommend that the Department of Medicaid take its time avoid unforeseen issues, and we ask that our voices be heard in the planning for this rather dramatic change in how seniors on Medicaid receive our long-term care.
- **In spite of the difficult budget picture, the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition continues to request that you increase the appropriations for Adult Protective Services to provide \$60,000 a year to each county.**  
This additional \$2.7 million would allow every county to provide the bare minimum of investigation and intervention services necessary to address the seriously underreported incidence of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Many of those served by APS workers are victims of self-neglect; the elderly

woman who no longer eats regularly, or who has repeatedly fallen and not received treatment. Studies have shown that these individuals and those suffering at the hands of others can be helped by early intervention and ultimately avoid otherwise unnecessary nursing facility placement and probable reliance on Medicaid.

- **The Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition is very concerned about the cuts to the Senior Community Services Block Grant, (SCSBG), and asks you to restore the combined 3% cut to that line item. In fact, we believe there are excellent reasons to return this to the 2001 funding level of \$15 million.**

The SCSBG is at its heart a Medicaid Diversion Program. These are the moneys that are available to the Area Agencies on Aging to provide services to older adults who are not yet Medicaid eligible, but will be, if they are not provided in-home assistance to maintain their independence and to relieve their unpaid caregivers from the overwhelming responsibility of attempting to keep their loved ones at home. We asked the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging what the impact would be of the House imposed 1.5% cut in their SCSBG funding, and they estimated it would mean the loss of 1399 meals and 332 transportation trips. The substitute bill now being considered would double that impact – and that is only the effect in Central Ohio. Increasing the availability of these services pre-Medicaid is the proverbial ounce of prevention.

- **Lastly, we ask that you reconsider the elimination of the Home Choice Program.** Home Choice was the demonstration program previously funded by the federal government that provided funds for moving people who wished to, and were able to, out of skilled nursing facilities and returning them home. This program has proven to be cost effective and has enriched the lives of those who have benefited from those funds. In fact it was so successful that the Department of Medicaid requested state funding to continue it. Presumably, when we move to MLTSS this would become the responsibility of the MCOs, but we are asking that you provide state funds to bridge the time between the end of federal funding and the implementation of MLTSS. Home care continues to be less expensive than nursing facility care, and any budget summary should reflect the added cost of retaining these individuals in NFs.

As a Coalition we appreciate your time and attention today, and look forward to working with you in the future as you consider issues that affect Ohio's seniors. I would be happy to answer any questions. Or, please feel free to contact me at the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition at [ohioagingadvocacy@gmail.com](mailto:ohioagingadvocacy@gmail.com).