



*Empowering Elders.
Strengthening Communities.*

Mike DeWine, Governor
Ursel J. McElroy, Director

**Testimony before the
OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

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Introduction

Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the time today to discuss our proposed investments in older Ohioans and their caregivers with Governor DeWine's first biennial budget. I am Ursel McElroy, Director of the Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio's federally designated State Unit on Aging.

At the Ohio Department of Aging, we represent 2.8 million Ohioans who are age 60 or older. We also advocate for an estimated 1.7 million family caregivers and those in our health care and long-term care workforces. We work closely with our 12 area agencies on aging, senior centers, regional long-term care ombudsman programs, non-profit organizations, and volunteer and advocacy organizations. Together, the aging network is committed to upholding the fundamental principle that older adults can live where they choose, with the people they choose, and with the ability to participate fully in their communities.

Understanding the needs of an aging population

Ohio's older adult population ranks sixth nationally and continues to grow. By 2020, 25 percent of the state's population will be 60 or older (see figures 1 and 2). And, as it grows in number, it will also grow more diverse. While our population is nearly 80 percent white, it also consists of a rich mix of urban and rural cultures and values. Nearly eight percent of Ohioans age 65 and older live in poverty. This rises to 18 percent for minority older adults. More than 23 percent of older Ohioans live in rural areas, including Appalachia, and 35 percent live alone. More than three out of four have at least one chronic condition and about a third live with a disability.

For perhaps the first time in history, we find ourselves serving three distinct generations of older adults. The influx of baby boomers continues, many of whom are relatively active and healthy. Then, there are individuals living well into retirement with changing care needs. Finally, Ohio has more residents living beyond age 90 than ever.

Despite important and thoughtful advances in our long-term care system, we are challenged to meet the increasingly diverse and complex needs of our rapidly aging population. For example, older Ohioans are at a heightened risk of exposure to abuse, neglect, and exploitation; and we have a shortage of workers to care for them.

This is a basic human rights issue. Protecting the health, safety, security, and vitality of older adults should not be an option in Ohio. Safeguarding these rights requires strategic investments and public policies that evolve with the changing populations we serve. During the upcoming biennium, we will focus our efforts on:

- Strengthening the caregiver infrastructure to support families living with chronic, disabling, or serious health conditions.
- Expanding nutritional and other programs that promote healthy living across the lifespan.
- Protecting the independence, vitality, and contributions of older adults.

Investing in older Ohioans and caregivers

In his first State of the State address, Governor DeWine pledged to invest significant resources and efforts to ensure a brighter future for all Ohioans. He charged me, along with the directors of the state's other Health and Human Services agencies, to address the most serious threats to the prosperity of Ohio families. To do this, it is critical that we continue and, in some instances, accelerate efforts to scale up programs and services.

Within our budget request, funding for core programs under the Older Americans Act is maintained with increases requested in General Revenue Funds to address a few of our dire issues.

SFY 2020 investments:

- All Funds of \$97.7 million, which is a 6.8 percent increase from SFY 2019
- General Revenue Funds of \$19.3 million, which is a 29.4 percent increase from SFY 2019

SFY 2021 investments:

- All Funds of \$99.3 million, which is a 1.6 percent increase from SFY 2020
- General Revenue Funds of \$20.8 million, which is a 7.6 percent increase from SFY 2019

Strengthening the caregiver infrastructure

In Ohio, approximately 1.7 million family caregivers provide care for loved ones – assistance valued at an estimated \$17.5 billion annually. In our 2017 statewide needs assessment to support our State Plan on Aging, more than twenty percent of respondents said they provide care for someone who is not able to take care of themselves.

Much of our ability to serve caregivers comes from federal funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Program and our Alzheimer’s Respite line item in the state budget. Combined with other federal, state, and local resources, these funds allow us to continue to build a robust support infrastructure for Ohio families. Caregiving, like aging itself, is a continuum. We are committed to improving the quality of and access to respite services, as well as building a system with our area agencies on aging and regional Alzheimer’s association chapters that provides anything a caregiver might need across his or her journey.

Workforce development is a common goal shared by all HHS directors to ensure Ohio can establish and maintain a caregiver infrastructure with the appropriate capacity and qualifications to meet the needs of children, older Ohioans, and individuals with disabilities. While our population is aging, too few Ohioans are choosing gerontology and direct health and home care as professions. Similarly, changing family dynamics are leading to fewer informal caregivers. There is a shortage of individuals willing and able to care for older adults in home and community-based settings while demand is increasing.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the overall employment of home health aides and personal care aides is projected to grow by 41 percent between 2016 and 2026, much faster than the average for all occupations. Home health aides and personal care aides are the third and fourth fastest growing occupations in the country, yet the bureau notes that low pay and high emotional demands may cause many workers to leave these occupations.

Our department and our state agency partners are collaborating on efforts to align regulatory, training, and monitoring standards across waiver programs to close these gaps to ensure Ohio can create attractive, fulfilling long-term care career pathways, not short-term jobs.

Expanding nutritional and other programs that promote healthy living across the lifespan

Good nutrition supports a healthy and active lifestyle, reduces frailty and disability, improves health outcomes, and reduces health care costs. Malnutrition is caused by a range of factors, including physical changes, limited income, lack of transportation, and more. Through our federal Older Americans Act and state General Revenue Funds, Ohio’s aging network provides more than 5.8 million home-delivered meals and 1.8 million congregate meals annually.

With our budget proposal, we will continue to support the health of our at-risk older adults through their consumption of more nutritious foods. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides federally funded coupons for locally grown fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets and roadside stands. This increases access to nutrition for older adults who may not be otherwise able to afford it, but it also supports Ohio's farmers, many of whom are older adults. However, insufficient federal funding means the program is available only in 45 Ohio counties today. The program is very popular where it is available; there is a 95 percent redemption rate and a waiting list of nearly 1,900 individuals. We have analyzed and prepared options for expanding this program to the remaining Ohio counties, starting with counties that have older adults with the greatest need.

Eighty-seven percent of our total budget supports and provides services to improve health outcomes, promote independence, and reduce care costs. Our focus is on outcomes that can positively or negatively influence the health and well-being of Ohio's older adults. Preventive and responsive approaches to nutritious meals, tobacco cessation, physical activity, falls prevention, and access to medical care including dental, vision, and hearing screenings, represent the largest portion of our State Plan on Aging.

Protecting the independence, vitality, and contributions of older adults

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman plays an important role in Ohio's consumer advocacy efforts. The Ombudsman, through its regional programs and committed volunteers, provides a voice to individuals seeking assistance with dispute resolution or by addressing questions in home, community, and institutional settings. The Ombudsman also assists with the state's quality initiatives by informing statewide policy development representing the needs of long-term care consumers.

Over the past decade, the number of consumers and the types of settings the Ombudsman serves have grown. Unfortunately, not all providers deliver the quality of services our loved ones deserve. Each year, the Ombudsman handles nearly 10,000 complaints involving a violation of rights, dignity, lack of care, inadequate care, or quality concerns. This increasing need coupled with increasing costs has resulted in reduced staff and fewer trained advocates to carry out their mission. As a result, their capacity to serve continues to decline at a time when they are needed most.

Our budget proposal strengthens the ability of the Ombudsman to protect and advocate for older Ohioans in a variety of settings. Our budget request increases funding for the Ombudsman by approximately \$1.4 million in SFY 2020 and \$2.6 million in SFY 2021. Anything less would mean that our older Ohioans and their families will not have the protections they need and deserve. Total General Revenue Funding for this program would be \$1.8 million in SFY 2020 and \$3.1 million in SFY 2021.

Protecting older adults from the heinous crimes of elder abuse, exploitation, and neglect is a priority for Governor DeWine. Some of these crimes are direct and measured intentions to harm or profit from an older adult, but many cases of abuse have several contributing factors. Research suggests that access to robust community resources, including senior centers, area agencies on aging, and programs like home delivered meals and caregiver support, can reduce the risk of abuse. Thus, maintaining a robust and accessible system of services and supports is as important as advancements in elder justice, law enforcement, and adult protective services.

A final area of protection that needs our immediate attention is the impact of our state's opioid crisis on older adults. Adults age 50 and older are the largest consumers of prescription drugs, are three times more likely to be prescribed opioids, and are at increased risk of misusing or abusing them. Older adults become targets for criminals looking to steal, sell, or use their prescription medications. Further, many

older adults are called upon to play a larger role in their families when loved ones are affected by substance abuse and related issues, such as incarceration, domestic violence, and child abuse or neglect. We will continue to include older adults in our plans regarding drug abuse – both as potential victims and as a resource to combat it.

Maintaining core programs

The Department of Aging offers a range of home and community-based supports primarily funded by the federal Older Americans Act, Medicaid, Department of Labor, US Department of Agriculture and our state General Revenue Fund. With established systems of supports and services in our 88 counties, we continue to strengthen partnerships and build new relationships so that we are strategically leveraging all available funds.

As the designated state unit on aging, we thoughtfully forecast and plan for the needs of older Ohioans and carry out a range of functions that support comprehensive and coordinated systems that are locally serving high-need older adults through Older Americans Act services. Our regional systems are administered by our area agencies on aging and are designed to assist older Ohioans in leading independent, meaningful, and dignified lives in whatever place they call home. Annually, our \$48 million in Older Americans Act funds is expanded to more than \$90 million through local levies to serve approximately 240,000 older adults. Our largest Older American's Act service is home-delivered meals in which \$40.5 million was expended last year to deliver 5.8 million meals to 39,350 home-bound older adults. The balance of funds is utilized to deliver a range of services including transportation, minor home modification, personal care, homemaker, congregate meals, health promotion services, legal assistance, respite for caregivers, among others.

Our commitment to older adults extends beyond community-based supports offered through the Older American's Act. Ohio has more than three decades of experience administering Medicaid home and community-based services waivers for individuals who are aged, blind, and disabled. Our PASSPORT and Assisted Living waivers provide an array of services that help preserve individuals' independence in their communities. The PASSPORT waiver serves individuals age 60 and older who need hands-on assistance with activities of daily living such as dressing, bathing, toileting, grooming, eating, and mobility. In SFY 2017, we spent \$261 million providing services to more than 26,000 individuals. The Assisted Living waiver provides services in licensed residential care facilities to individuals age 21 and older to delay or prevent nursing facility placement and provides more intensive care than is available through traditional home care services. In SFY 2017, we spent \$48 million providing services to more than 4,000 individuals.

We are charged with the day-to-day administration of these programs and work closely with the Ohio Department of Medicaid and the 13 PASSPORT administrative agencies to ensure the health and safety of the 30,000 individuals served in these programs. Through this partnership, we provide case management to program enrollees and oversee a network of more than 2,500 providers.

As the population ages and more individuals rely on our programs for assistance with their long-term care needs, we must ensure provider quality. Through a series of on-site review activities, the Department of Aging and the PASSPORT administrative agencies enroll providers, monitor quality, offer technical assistance, and issue disciplinary action as necessary. The core of our work is to ensure delivery of person-centered quality services and supports to serve older adults.

We will continue to provide flexibility in how our area agencies on aging deliver these services and we monitor them to ensure these programs yield the intended impacts and are modified when improvements are needed.

Evaluating our impact

Our federal programs establish parameters for the local procurement and delivery of quality home and community-based services, requiring the use of federally approved best practices such as home-delivered meals meeting the dietary reference intakes, hiring a qualified workforce to deliver person-centered care, and utilizing evidence-based programming to provide preventive and health management programs.

We engage in quality management practices using data collection, data analysis, assessments, consumer experience surveys, studies, analyses, and more to guide system and service improvements where needed. Our evaluation system has many benefits including helping us to:

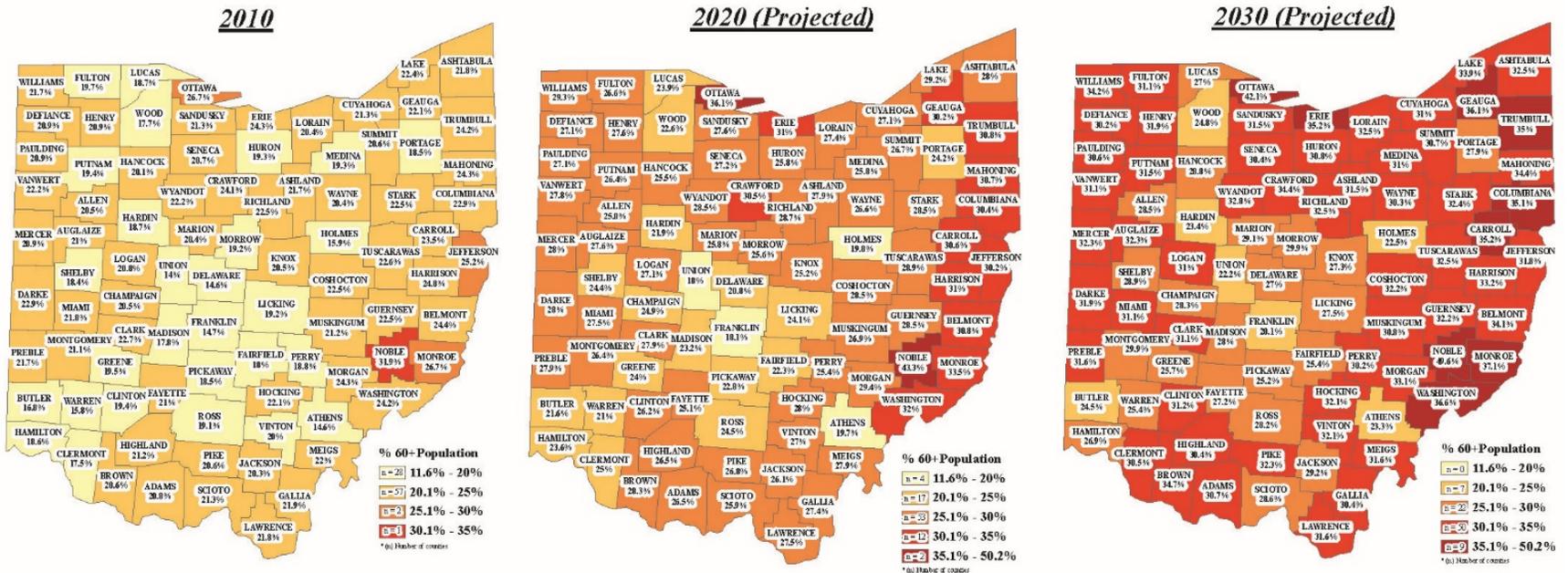
- Better understand older adults' needs and how to meet these needs;
- Design objectives that are more achievable and measurable;
- Monitor progress toward meeting our objectives more effectively and efficiently;
- Increase our programs' productivity and effectiveness; and
- Convey our programs' successes.

Closing

Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Committee, on behalf of the 2.9 million older Ohioans and 1.7 million family caregivers, I humbly ask for your support of our budget request. We will continue to work with our aging network partners and providers to evaluate and bolster existing programs and resources and identify best practices worthy of investment and development.

It is imperative that our branches of government ensure that Ohio is not only a place where Ohioans want to raise families, live, and work, but also is the state in which they want to live as they age.

Figure 1



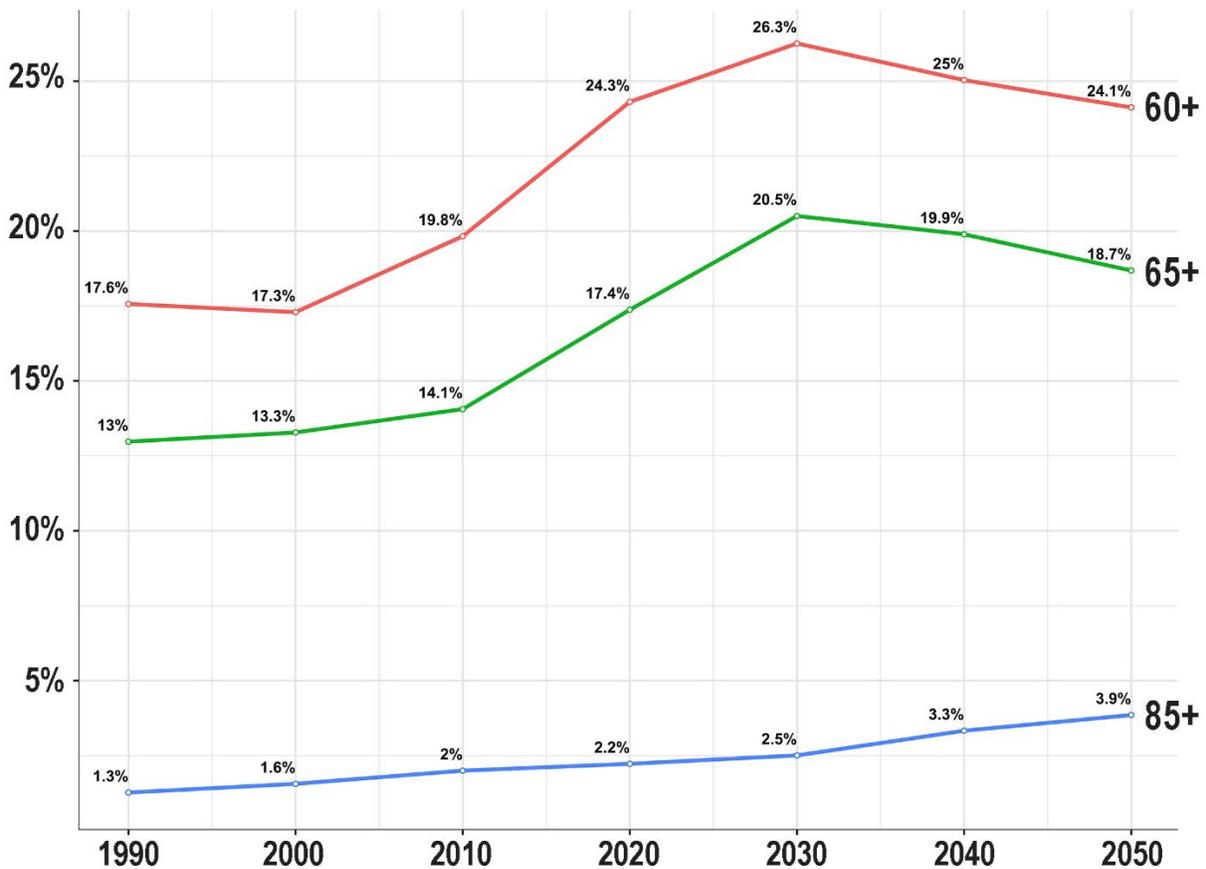
Source: Scripps Gerontology Center

Figure 2

Ohio's Population by Age Group

Year	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040
Total Population	10,861,837	11,353,140	11,536,504	11,575,100	11,615,120	11,680,180
60+ Population	1,908,187	1,963,489	2,287,424	2,814,200	3,050,200	2,924,320
65+ Population	1,409,315	1,507,757	1,622,015	2,011,260	2,381,610	2,323,420
85+ Population	137,605	176,796	230,429	257,540	290,970	388,900

Year	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040
% 60+	17.6%	17.3%	19.8%	24.3%	26.3%	25.0%
% 65+	13.0%	13.3%	14.1%	17.4%	20.5%	19.9%
% 85+	1.3%	1.6%	2.0%	2.2%	2.5%	3.3%



Source: Scripps Gerontology Center