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Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

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Testimony of Amy Roehrenbeck, Esq., Executive Director, Ohio CSEA Directors' Association HB166

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on HB166. My name is Amy Roehrenbeck, and I am the Executive Director for the Ohio CSEA Directors' Association (OCDA). OCDA is a membership organization of county child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs), dedicated to strengthening Ohio's child support program.

In the Governor's "State of the State" address he reminded us that children have only one chance to grow up, and that we have a moral obligation to "get it right." Ohio's Child Support Program serves over one million children and our county child support agencies work diligently to ensure that these children receive financial support for a better future. Our program serves these children for long periods of time, often from infancy to adulthood, and beyond. We provide services to families of all types, from divorcing parents, to unmarried parents, to caretaker relatives, to families with children in protective custody, and others, regardless of family income. The child support program encourages responsible parenting, family self-sufficiency, and child well-being by providing services to locate parents, establish parentage, establish child support and medical support orders, collect support, modify orders when circumstances have changed, and enforce orders that are not being paid.

We come to you today to ask for a modest increase of \$3 million to our Child Support-Local Allocation line item, 600502, which is currently \$23.4 million in this budget. Our program has been flat-funded since FY12, with no general cost of living increase, and then we took a 1.5% reduction in our allocation in the last biennium's budget. Our request represents a restoration of that cut, as well as a new investment in our program based on a cost of living adjustment from FY12 forward. An increase in our State Match Allocation would help counties maintain services for families, while preserving Ohio's outstanding performance, as well as maximizing the federal



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financial participation and incentive funding. The Child Support Program can draw down two federal dollars for one state/local dollar, so an increase to our allocation of \$3 million would allow access to nearly \$6 million more in federal dollars, allowing us to invest nearly \$9 million more into our program.

Since FY12 the local budgets of county child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs) have been challenged by rising costs for technology, salaries, health insurance, and the general cost of doing business. Last year the allocation methodology was updated, which also resulted in a number of counties losing funding as a result of the new methodology. The time is right to address the appropriate funding level necessary for county CSEAs to operate effectively and efficiently in serving Ohio's families.

An increase to our Child Support-Local Allocation would also assist counties with their growing costs for technology, which includes costs associated with document management. County CSEAs have the present opportunity to be a part of an Enterprise Document Management System (EDMS), but this opportunity requires them to take on the run cost for the system. Some CSEAs cannot take advantage of this opportunity due to the cost, which keeps them running on paper files or on a document management platform that may no longer be supported in the future. The budget currently provides full funding of the EDMS for the Child Welfare program, but not for the Child Support program, even though we serve the same families, which leaves counties on the hook to fund it individually (and also means that not all counties can participate).

County CSEAs are also challenged by a rising caretaker caseload, as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives are stepping in to care for children as a result of the drug crisis. You heard Director Hall testify regarding the increase in children in protective care, which is now around 15,000 children. These children are a part of the 306,723 children in the Child Support Program that are currently residing outside of their parents' homes in the care of relatives. These cases are often very complicated and require intensive case management.

We are proud of the cost-effective work that our agencies do, collecting \$6.51 for every dollar expended in our program. In FFY2018 CSEAs collected \$1.7 billion in child support and medical support for families. We are unique in the fact that we also collect and return money to the state for cost recovery. In FFY2018 we returned \$30 million to Medicaid, of which \$12.2 million went back to the state and \$57.7 million to TANF, of which \$21.3 million went back to the state. We believe that support is key to a child's future and CSEAs are on the front lines in providing services for the children in our program.

We do not believe that Ohio can have a budget focused on families and children without looking to make an investment in the Child Support Program. We ask for your support in increasing our Child Support-Local Allocation by \$3 million in this budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.