



**House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services**

House Bill 166 – Interested Party

Kathryn Whittington, Ashtabula County Commissioner

April 10, 2019

Good morning Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Kathryn Whittington and I currently serve as an Ashtabula County Commissioner and Vice Chair of the CCAO Human Services Committee.

I'm here to talk to you today about the many human services programs counties provide Ohioans as they relate to the state biennial budget, House Bill 166.

One of the most difficult tasks facing counties today is the administration of services for children who are abused or neglected. The fallout from the opiate crisis has put immense pressures on the child protective system. Annual costs of placing children in foster care has risen by \$53 million to \$384 million in two short years, even as more children were being placed with kin in unpaid settings. Once the children enter county care, they often require longer placements and additional services to cope with the trauma they have experienced. Many cases are also traumatic for our child protective caseworkers and, as a result, we are experiencing higher than normal turnover and a workforce shortage. The complexities of this crisis are eating away at county resources; even counties who have successfully passed children services levies are struggling to provide the required resources.

HB 166 in its current form makes significant funding increases to the state child protective system, nearly doubling state funding for children's services and providing an additional \$20 million for child protection. The bill also allocates several million dollars to kinship and foster care efforts. CCAO supports this investment in our children. The flexibility of these dollars will help us address the rising costs of child placement, recruit and support kinship caregivers, foster care and adoptive families, and retain our most valuable asset – our case workers who are on the front lines everyday protecting Ohio's children.

The bill currently contains language that would create a maintenance of effort (MOE) for county share of children services funding. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services director would have rulemaking authority regarding the MOE. CCAO is currently analyzing this proposal through our internal committee process.



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Additionally, CCAO appreciates the investment in multi-system youth in HB 166. We support the \$25 million for placement costs of multi-system youth in our public children services agencies or at risk of entering into the children services system. Many of our county agencies have experienced pressures from the high cost of room and board, which is not covered by insurance, for children with needs across systems. This funding would help alleviate some of those pressures.

CCAO supports additional investment in adult protective services (APS). Counties provide a uniform APS program for older adults who require protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Currently, HB 166 holds APS funding at its FY19 level. CCAO supports increasing the state contribution to APS to cover at least one full time APS caseworker per county. An additional \$3.12 million added to the current appropriation would give each county \$65,000 to accomplish that goal. An additional \$10M, made up of \$3.12M for full time caseworkers and the remainder to be distributed by formula for protective services, would give us the resources to build out the infrastructure needed to address our growing APS needs.

HB 166 retains FY19 levels of investment for the state match allocation to county child support enforcement agencies. CCAO supports a \$3 million increase to this allocation, which would restore the 1.5% cut this line item sustained in the previous biennium and provide a 1.02% COLA from FY12. One in three Ohio children are impacted by our child support system, and the services our child support enforcement agencies provide them is essential.

CCAO supports the significant investments made in the crisis stabilization funds housed with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The flexibility of these funds is crucial, as counties have drastically different needs relating to mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery across the state.

CCAO is currently reviewing HB 166 language that gives the governor authority to declare a public health emergency and use any available resources of state and local governments to address the emergency.

HB 166 retains FY19 levels of funding for family and children first councils (FCFCs). These councils work to reduce duplication of services and to help families navigate health, social, and human services. In order to perform these functions, regardless of size, each county was allocated \$20,000. This amount was decreased in FY10 to \$15,750 per county. The councils serve a crucial role in administratively coordinating services for children in our counties. CCAO supports an increase in the annual allocation to councils to bring FCFCs to \$30,000 per county. The bill also allows the continuation of family and children first flexible spending pools, which will provide flexibility for our counties.

CCAO is supportive of the \$1 million increase in funding for the Bureau of Children with Medical Handicaps program.

HB 166 permits the director of the Department of Medicaid to transfer up to \$10 million in state share Medicaid funds to support costs of county job and family services departments in transitioning to the new work requirement program. The budget language specifies that the funds

cannot be used for “existing and ongoing operating expenses.” CCAO is reviewing this language through our internal committee process in light of the federal approval of Ohio’s Section 1115 waiver.

As you discuss the priorities for Ohio’s operating budget for this biennium, CCAO believes it is essential for the General Assembly to consider and preserve these investments in crucial services provided to Ohioans. I thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions.