



Ohio House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee

April 10, 2019

Testimony from Susan Marshall

Executive Director, Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS)

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about H.B. 166, and in particular, the Adult Protective Services program that is part of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' budget. My name is Susan Marshall and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS).

The Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services is a statewide coalition that strives to enhance the provision of services to adults at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation through collaboration, education and advocacy.

We believe in a just society that recognizes that all people are equal. No matter how old we are, we are entitled to be treated as full members of our communities. Policies and programs that connect us to our communities at all stages of life are the most effective strategy for curtailing elder abuse and neglect. Without this structural stability, social isolation occurs, putting us at greater risk of neglect and abuse.

Adult Protective Services is among the pillars we rely on to be there for us as we age. This support has been reinforced with recent changes to law that has improved understanding of elder abuse, included more mandatory reporters, fortified our state and local systems and connected interrelated supports to improve Ohio's local solutions.

This transformation of Adult Protective Services has resulted in a system that is intended to be more responsive to our communities and to be better positioned to respond quickly to reports of elder abuse, neglect, self-neglect and exploitation. One example, each county must now establish its own interdisciplinary team (I-Team) bringing together at a minimum, Adult Protective Services, law enforcement, courts, and social services to engage in case reviews, raise awareness, offer interagency education while identifying gaps and needed resources. I-Teams are an incredibly useful tool to leverage resources and expertise from across the county however, it takes time to develop relationships and to establish the commitment necessary to ensure agencies attend meetings and share precious resources to address the many facets of elder abuse.

The Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services supports increased investments to bolster and reinforce the effectiveness of these important social structures to prevent elder abuse and neglect. As it stands currently, there is no other dedicated source of funding for Adult Protective Services in Ohio beyond the state line-item in the Job and Family Services' budget. That funding is allocated equally among the 88 counties and amounts to a little over \$31,000 a year, which is simply not enough to carry out the responsibility of Ohio's Adult Protective Services system.

While some communities have successfully leveraged local dollars to expand their system provision, there remains undue pressure on the community to deal with competing yet important priorities, and results in a distinct disparity in capacity between those counties with the means to further subsidize the system compared to those who cannot.

We are all aging, and we are living longer. This is Ohio's Longevity Era. Our communities are social structures that need strong, integrated supports to bridge connections for all of us as we age. Supports, including Adult Protective Services, are needed to keep the structure sound and to effectively prevent and address all forms of elder abuse and neglect.

That is why we ask for an increased investment for Adult Protective Services: to enable local communities to make more solutions, strengthen existing connections and to find better ways to provide timely justice and resolutions addressing elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

It is 2019 and there are counties in Ohio without a dedicated, full-time adult protective service worker. Each county should be provided with at least \$65,000 per year so that every county can employ at least one full-time staff person and additional resources to offer wrap-around supportive services addressing immediate essentials while enabling a more systemic response to the needs of our communities. To accomplish these goals, we ask for an investment of \$7.26 million per year, above the current funding level of \$2.74 million per year.

Just in SFY 2018, Ohio has seen 3,000 more reports of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation statewide, totaling almost 20,000 reports in one year. Anecdotally we believe that these numbers are only increasing, which aligns with recent research that says that an estimated 100,000 or more cases of elder abuse and neglect occur in Ohio each year, with only a fraction reported to adult protective services.

The consequences of not having a robust adult protective services system in place to ensure access to justice for us all as we age is significant. Financial losses (annually estimated to be \$36.5 billion per year nationally) can bankrupt individuals and even other family members, causing survivors to turn to publicly funded programs to provide for their basic needs. In fact, one in ten financial abuse victims will turn to Medicaid as a direct result of their own monies being stolen from them. Victims of elder abuse and neglect are four times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home and three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital.

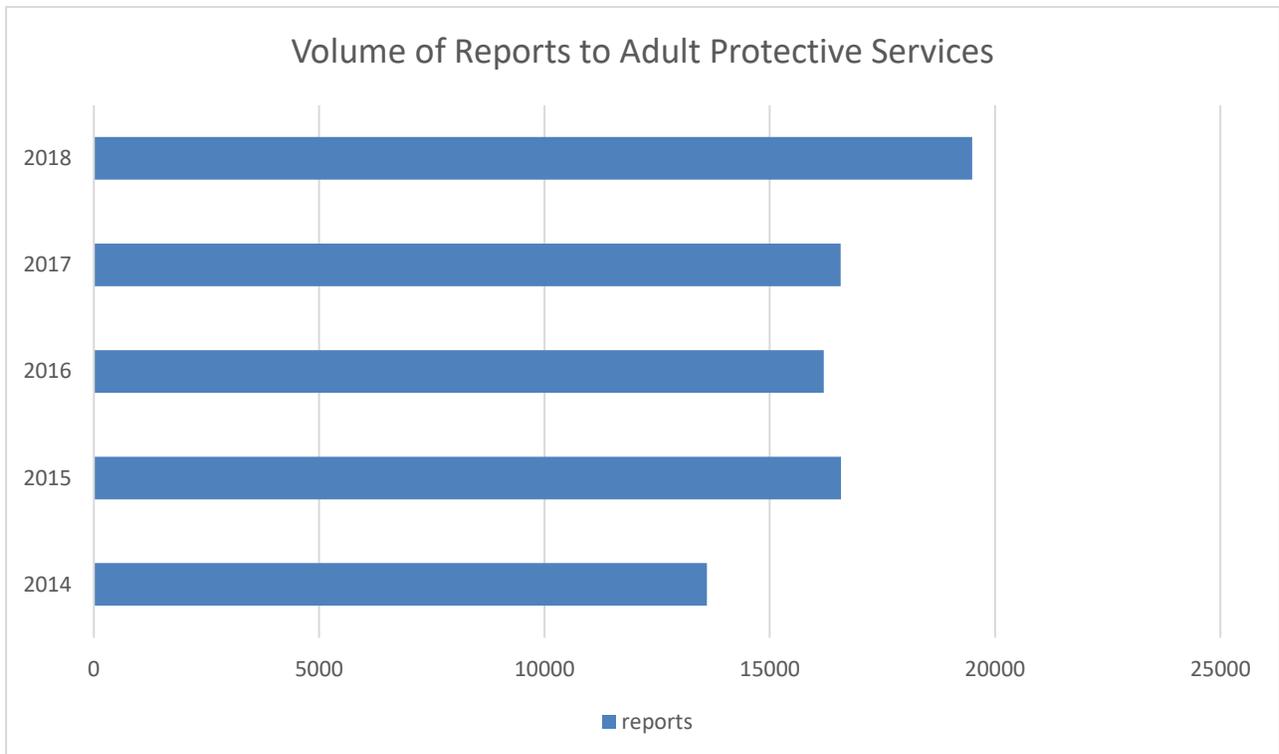
As I stated earlier, throughout Ohio, there are many counties that do not have even one worker dedicated to Adult Protective Services. Often, the responsibility for providing adult protective services for those who are 60 and older has been passed off to already strained Child Protective Services workers. While there are some similarities between these two protective programs, there are significant differences. This is unfair to both the staff and to all of us who only want to live healthy, engaged and secure lives with access to the supports we need to remain in our homes as productive members of our communities.

To conclude, the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services respectfully requests that you consider an increased investment in adult protective services. Each county should be provided at least \$65,000 per year so that every county can employ at least one full-time staff person and additional

resources to offer wrap-around supportive services enabling the dedicated Adult Protective Services worker to create a feasible safety plan for the abused older adult alleviating further risk while building strong communities ready to form a place for all of us to live, work, play and thrive. An investment of \$7.26 million per year above the current funding levels of \$2.74 million per year provides an investment in Ohio's present as well as Ohio's future.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Susan Marshall
Executive Director
Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services





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