

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE OHIO FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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Presented by

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Exclusive Contract Agency with
Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services
For Adult Protective Services Investigations and Follow-Up

Background and Relevance

Clermont Senior Services, a 501(c)(3) agency, has the exclusive contract with the Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services to conduct the investigations on all referrals made through Adult Protective Services, as well as conducting guardianship investigations under contract with Clermont County Probate Court.

As the administrator and provider of services for all senior levy funds under contract with the Clermont County Commissioners, Clermont Senior Services is the gateway for persons 60 years of age and older in Clermont County. Now, in our 50th year, this agency has provided a broad range of community-based services (medical transportation, home care, home-delivered meals, adult day services, home repair and modification), thus enabling older adults to continue to live safely in their own homes for as long as possible – and delaying, if not completely eliminating, the need for nursing home care.

Clermont County was the first county to pass a levy to support services for seniors in the State of Ohio in 1982, and the taxpayers have continued to entrust Clermont Senior Services and support a levy since that time.

The Miami University Scripps Gerontology Center projects that the 60+ population in Clermont County will grow by 120% between 2010 and 2020. By 2020, 30.5% of the total population in Clermont County will be persons age 60 and over.

TESTIMONY

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and members of the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee, thank you for hearing my testimony today. I am Cynthia Gramke, the Executive Director/CEO of Clermont Senior Services, a private, non-profit organization having the exclusive contract with the Clermont County Department of Family Services to conduct the investigations and follow-up for cases referred to Adult Protective Services. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak, specifically, to Adult Protective Services and the issues and funding challenges that exist as we work hard to protect the most vulnerable older adults, who have been victimized through abuse, neglect and exploitation.

In Clermont County, there were **124** Adult Protective Services referrals of abuse, neglect and/or financial exploitation **in 2008**. This number has exploded in recent years, reaching a high of **286 in 2017**, only to be blown out of the water with **448 referrals for investigation in 2018**.

Moreover, these cases are far more complex and the situations much worse than ever before.

In July of last year, a referral was made to APS by hospital staff concerning a 75 year old female, covered in feces with severe dementia, was found living in a vehicle with her two adult children at a local McDonalds. Report stated all were homeless.

Upon admission, hospital staff reported that neither the referred older adult, nor her adult children, were capable of providing any information or engaging in logical

conversation. The adult daughter, who claimed to be the primary caregiver, had been diagnosed with mental illness and the adult son had a diagnosis of developmental delay. It was determined that the older adult in referral and adult children had been living in a vehicle for at least 3 months or more, going from parking lot to parking lot in the community. The adult was not receiving the medical or physical care she needed.

Adult Protective Services petitioned the court for emergency protective services as all parties (adult in referral and adult children) were homeless, and the children could not provide care for their mother.

Orders for Adult Protective Services were put in place naming the Director of APS as the authorized person to ensure placement of the older adult in a nursing facility after medical treatment at the hospital. Due to the circumstances, the adult children were deemed unsuitable to serve as an appropriate guardian for their mother. After stabilization with medical intervention and one month after the initial referral, the older adult was transferred to a nursing facility, and the Court appointed a permanent Guardian of Person who is part of the Volunteer Guardian Program at Clermont Senior Services.

The older adult in referral has been receiving appropriate care since the appointment of the volunteer guardian and is no longer homeless or dependent upon her adult children who could not provide for her or themselves. APS Investigators also referred the adult children to a community agency to assist with current homeless situation.

While there are many mandates that protect the lives of other vulnerable populations, Adult Protective Services is the only mandated service for older adults in the State of Ohio.

The actual total cost to CSS to handle these very complex and ever-growing number of cases, has escalated to **\$372,223.36 in 2019**. The current case load demands one full-time chief investigator, two full-time investigators, one part-time investigator, nearly 50% of the RN Director of Case Management, Home Care and Adult Protective Services, working as part of the team charged with protecting the physical and financial wellbeing of the most vulnerable of older adults in our community.

In cases of financial exploitation, we must work to save seniors from falling prey to the unlawful, deceitful, and criminal actions of family, friends and strangers draining them of all of a lifetime of savings and frugal living, often thrusting them into bankruptcy and foreclosure. They are left with no choice but to become dependent upon Medicaid and other public assistance programs for the remainder of their lives. Then, the taxpayer ultimately suffers, as well.

We have a basic societal responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Adult Protective Services IS the lifeline for the very most vulnerable of older adults. The crimes that are levied against those who are unable to stand up for themselves or even make decisions for themselves, as horrific. There must be a regard for those who are too old, too weak, too afraid and who cannot protect themselves.

APS IS the lifeline for the most vulnerable older adults and has gone, virtually, unnoticed, having been grossly underfunded over the years. I am grateful the State is taking notice. The Commission for Elder Justice We certainly thank you for the last budget modification, increasing the previous long-time annual allocation from \$7,000 to \$30,000 per county in 2017.

Ohio's older adults, our veterans, deserve greater respect and support than that. The reality is that I am not asking for the **nearly \$400,000** it takes to protect the lives of older adults in our community, but I respectfully request that you demonstrate your regard for the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable of older adults by increasing the annual appropriation for Adult Protective Services from **\$30,000 to \$65,000 per County, per year.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.