



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR CENTERS

The Ohio Association of Senior Centers, serving Ohio for the past 60 years, wishes to register its strong opposition to provisions added to HB 62 passed by the house and introduced in the Senate by Senators Sean O'Brien and Michael Rulli to modify the O.R.C which regulates use of local tax levies, and particularly senior tax levies, to provide match for local public transit dollars.

Senior tax levy dollars are approved by the voters and allocated per law to provide services for seniors. Modifying the law to include permissive language for pooling senior levy dollars with other funds to secure federal matching funds for general public transit expenses without accountability as to how seniors specifically will benefit from such allocation is inappropriate, if not deceptive. Such a move would contradict the transparency to which the legislature has committed itself.

Further, senior levy dollars are typically allocated in a forward looking multi-year plan. Any transfer of those funds from the original plan could produce waiting lists for home delivered meals. Senior and Aging services actively participate in Locally Coordinated Human Service and Public Transportation Plans around the state. To enact legislation the way it is written would circumvent that process standardized by the Ohio Department of Transportation. Redirecting these dollars, especially midstream, jeopardizes the planning and coordination that have helped to make transportation effective for thousands of seniors statewide.

The amendment lacks transparency and sets a dangerous precedent for making senior services and senior tax levy funds in general vulnerable to inappropriate redirection. There is no need to add language to the O.R.C. to pool local money for federal match. This is already being done through contracts. Due diligence was not achieved in developing this amendment or these best practices already would have come to light. We recommend that the proposed amendment be defeated, or at a minimum, tabled, and that language protecting the integrity of senior tax levy funds for senior services be adopted instead.

Any such proposed legislation needs much further study of the potential impact before being given serious consideration. It is important that legislation not be passed which may appear to benefit one locality or vendor and at the same time set a dangerous detrimental precedent.

Specifically, any proposed legislation should include language which prevents the proceeds of levies approved prior from being subject to changes in allocations. Changes, that is new legislation, should be implemented only after full disclosure to and approval by the voters.