

TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE – WORKFORCE
SUBCOMMITTEE

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By

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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Chairman Beagle and members of the Senate Finance Workforce Subcommittee,

I am Cindy Farson, Director of the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, serving Franklin and its seven contiguous counties, also representing the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

I'd like to testify on Adult Protective Services in the budget bill. In our role as case managers for over 7000 Central Ohio older adults in Passport, My Care and the local levy program, Adult Protective Services is a critical service, and the workers, some of our most important partners.

I was here last year testifying on HB 483, and was so encouraged by the appropriation for APS in that bill. I serve on the Attorney General's Elder Abuse Task Force and served on Ohio's Adult Protective Services Funding Workgroup which was part of HB 483.

The serious attention given to Adult Protective Services in Ohio the past few years has been a tremendous improvement. The expectations and training set up for Adult Protective Services through the 10 M appropriation are a great step forward in my opinion and the one time innovation and capacity grants have been well received.

You probably know there is a however coming. That would be on the current amount in the Adult Protective Services (APS) line item in HB 64. The high point of funding for APS was \$2.8 million 16 years ago. It was considered an unfunded mandate then by most counties and later funding plunged to \$500,000. Reports to adult protective services rose by almost 60% since 1989, but state funding fell by more than 80%. The proposed amount in HB 64 of approximately 3.5 million certainly is an improvement over \$500,000. It also improves the funding allocations for smaller counties by giving \$30,000 to each county where they may have had under \$2000 previously. However, given the increase in need for APS over the years, and the planned enforcement of new expectations for the Counties, I believe it will still be considered an

unfunded mandate. Counties need to be able to count on stable funding to employ at least one APS dedicated worker or the equivalent in small counties and more in larger counties. The plan is to have a state 800 number for Ohioans that don't know where to turn locally, which is a good idea. That number will roll directly to the local APS and there needs to be trained staff there to respond to that call in a timely manner and provide follow-up action. Expectations are increasing through this bill, as they should, but resources must also be available to make the system work.

In one of our counties that has local levy funding to help with APS staffing, neighbors brought an older woman to the hospital claiming to be the caregivers. The hospital recognized that the neighbors were not acting in the frail woman's best health interest and suspected financial exploitation. They called APS, and APS referred her for PASSPORT home care services.

Because they had more than a fraction of an APS worker, APS was also able to provide ongoing visits to make sure the neighbors were not again identifying themselves as caretakers and taking advantage of the older woman. This allowed her to stay in her home where she wanted to be.

Follow up in these interventions is critical to many vulnerable people who may find themselves in the same position over and over again.

I have certainly heard the argument that though working Interdisciplinary teams, community resources will be found to help people. I am a believer in these teams and how effective it can be to get service agencies, law enforcement and the courts together to solve problems. Funds for services to help people stay at home are often coordinated through PASSPORT, local levies or Older Americans Act funds. But there must be a knowledgeable APS representative, with the time to thoroughly investigate cases, bring them to the team and sometimes follow the case for effective coordination to happen. Often the worker is juggling both APS and Children services

complaints, and handling home clean ups and other direct services themselves. We need resources within an APS unit to make the system work. And we need funds for emergency clean ups and emergency temporary housing for the most critical cases in all counties.

The Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services is asking for \$20 million in this budget to fund the core minimum services that are part of HB 64. The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on aging supports this request because of the growth in cases that we see locally and the importance of the role of Adult Protective Services in keeping people safe at home for as long as possible. Thank you for your consideration.