

Interested Testimony HB 49

Healthier Buckeye Councils

Gene Krebs

12173 St Rt 732, Camden Ohio 45311

513-739-2412 cell 513-796-2412 home ekkrebs@gmail.com

I should inform the committee that I am appearing as a private citizen and not under employ or contract to anyone to discuss these issues. In the interests of full disclosure, Phil DeVol, coauthor of Bridges out of Poverty and author of Bridges to Sustainable Communities, has asked me to co-author his next book, and I have just recently sent off to him my initial 400 page draft. Currently Phil's work is used in 44 states and 5 countries, with 331 organizations in Ohio alone using his methodology.

It is Phil DeVol's work that forms the intellectual framework for the Healthier Buckeye Councils (HBC) and related structure; an organic and grassroot driven model of dealing with poverty, drug addiction, mental health, employment, workforce development and predatory lending issues in a collaborative and innovative manner. Then Speaker Pro Tem Amstutz consulted with Mr. DeVol and myself when creating Healthier Buckeye Councils in the last budget.

I am not here to ask for more money. I understand the situation the state is in financially. There are two areas where greater clarification and ease of evaluation could be helpful, and in the long term, help save the state a lot of money, as according to United Way of Summit, each person on public assistance will cost the government about \$1.4 million if on such for an entire lifetime.

First, there is perhaps some unnecessary confusion over whether or not the 21 Healthier Buckeye Councils will have access to funding to finish out their programs to the end of this calendar year. The reason for this

when the HBC program was begun, there were problems in the roll out, and the first fiscal years' worth of funding got rolled into the second fiscal year. (\$5 million lumped into the \$6.5 million of the next fiscal year) It would not be helpful to fix the blame, but rather to fix the problem. So...the money was late and they funded two years of programs at once. Last month ODJFS sent a letter to the various HBC sites.

Date: 5/2/17 10:35 AM

Good morning,

The Healthier Buckeye program is ending on June 30th, 2017. At this time, there is no language that allows for ODJFS to continue current agreements and encumber funding forward. We are currently reviewing language in the house substitute bill and will continue to update as appropriate.

The following is the close out schedule and process for this year's Healthier Buckeye Grants.

Amendments: Amendments to the grant agreement are no longer possible.

Budget Revisions: Budget revisions are no longer possible for this State Fiscal Year.

Grant expenditures: Your grant agreement and purchase order ends on Friday, June 30th, 2017. All services and expenditures must be performed by this date. Final invoices for the June period are not due till July 2017.

Final close out of grant agreement: All final invoices and reports are due to the Office of Family Assistance by Friday, September 1st, 2017. Invoices received after that date may be denied.

Record maintenance: Please refer to Article VI of your grant agreement for the time line and requirements for maintaining records and files.

Sincerely,

Matthew Cunningham

What makes this very confusing is that Rep. Romanchuk placed an amendment into the ODOT budget that specifically allowed the funding to be available to HBC sites until 12-31-2017.

In that light, advocates in NW Ohio have made the following argument and suggested this change:

1) Language was inserted In the House [Transportation] Budget Bill with the intent of providing a no cost extension to the counties that received the Healthier Buckeye Council Grant (HBC), which was included in the previous biennial budget bill but only allocated in SFY 2017 by ODJFS.

The intent of the language that the legislators put in the bill was to extend the HBC agreements through December 31, 2017 with language that “unencumbered funds” could be extended through that time. However, ODJFS is interpreting the term “unencumbered funds” very technically – so for them all of the funds that had been allocated under the last biennial budget bill for HBC funding are technically already “encumbered” since they have already been allocated, by grant, to each of the counties receiving an HBC award. So technically speaking – there are no unencumbered funds to extend through 12/31/17. Given this very technical interpretation by ODJFS, they provided notice to all of us that that grants will end 6/30/17.

2) Here is the recommended replacement language for the bill:

RECOMMENDATION: If there is any way to still change the language in the bill now or during the reconciliation process – would be better stated as follows: “This act authorizes the extension of current Healthier Buckeye Council Agreements for all counties that funds have already been encumbered for by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, through December 31, 2017.”

The other issue is that one of the main reasons to have the HBC pilot program was to learn from the 21 locations about what programs had the most success. It turns out that having this done by ODJFS is not a good match due to a lack of history and expertise on these types programs, and in direct conversation with Director Dungy she was fine with moving the program to another agency.

The Local Government Innovation Council (LGIC) does this type of analysis, in its role of encouraging collaboration, and sharing of services. Another bit of full disclosure is that I sit on this volunteer body, and the General Assembly was gracious a few years ago to allow me some input on its creation and structure. When we set it up, we never anticipated it encouraging much beyond the classic local governmental structures of townships, cities, schools and counties. Much to my surprise a few years ago human service agencies began to apply.

Since one of the core concepts of Bridges out of Poverty is that the only place in Ohio you should find silos is on farms, and the LGIC is all about busting down silos; this should be a good match. Phil and I met with the key staffers at DSA, which houses LGIC, and while they had to run the trap lines on this, there were no obvious roadblocks. I should reemphasize that Director Dungy indicated that her agency was not set up to do a proper evaluation of the HBC program, and I assure the committee that LGIC does this type of analysis in every grant cycle. Also Mr. Amstutz referred to the idea of shifting HBC to LGIC as “brilliant”.

So, if you would be so kind to shift the HBC program from ODJFS to DSA/LGIC, and we can do an analysis and be able to tell you which of the 21 programs has produced an impact in several human service indicators, leading to a better more productive citizenry and less cost for the state. At a later state budget process we can discuss which programs to emphasize.

Thank you and I’ll try to answer any questions.