



FINANCE – HEALTH AND MEDICAID
SUBCOMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 5/17/17

Name: Bridget Gargan

Address: 73 E. Wilson Bridge Rd., Suite B1, Worthington, OH 43085

Telephone: 614-431-0616

Organization Representing: Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACB)

Testifying on Bill Number: House Bill 49

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: _____



Testimony of Bridget Gargan
Executive Director, Ohio Association of County Boards of DD
Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee
House Bill 49 – State Biennium Budget
May 17, 2017

Chairman Hackett, Ranking Member Tavares, and Members of the Health and Medicaid Subcommittee, my name is Bridget Gargan, and I am executive director of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACB). OACB advocates on behalf of all 88 county boards of developmental disabilities. I am here today here to testify on provisions in the budget bill impacting county boards of developmental disabilities and the people, families, and communities they serve.

County boards of developmental disabilities are unique among Ohio's public human services agencies in that they are responsible for supporting people in every stage of their lives. No other agency has this lifetime requirement. Because of this, county boards need to ensure that they are always maximizing available funds and using local resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

This lifelong commitment to supporting people with developmental disabilities is why OACB is focusing on policy changes in this budget that will permit a more predictable, flexible, and sustainable system capable of serving people with developmental disabilities and their families for many years to come. In addition to boosting county boards' efficiency, these policy changes will allow boards to more effectively solve problems on their own and in collaboration with local and state partners.

There have been many changes to the as-introduced version of House Bill 49 that, if passed into law, will both positively and negatively affect the ability of Ohio's 88 county boards of developmental disabilities to adequately serve, support, and protect people with developmental disabilities in their communities. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our feedback on these changes at this time. These include the following:

Support: Waiting List Modernization

OACB strongly supports the amendment that will modernize Ohio's outdated Medicaid waiver waiting list statute, which the House included in the substitute bill. This change will allow county boards to work more effectively with people with developmental disabilities and their families to identify immediate service needs and allocate limited resources where they will have the highest possible impact. This measure has the support of a wide range of DD system stakeholders, including organizations representing people with developmental disabilities, family members, guardians, private providers, and county boards of DD.

Support: Restoring Wages Increase for Direct Support Professionals

OACB strongly opposes the House's removal of funding that would allow for a long overdue wage increase for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). People with developmental disabilities, their families, and the agencies that support them are continually confronted with the fact that – unless providers are able to more competitively compensate their DSPs – there will be no meaningful improvements in even the most basic measures of care in the foreseeable future.

The lack of a wage increase for DSPs guarantees that high staff turnover rate among agency providers will continue to plague our community and diminish the quality of care for people with developmental

disabilities. This is an unacceptable outcome and, therefore, we request this provision be restored to the as-introduced level for FY19, which is \$4.9 million state share.

Support: Restoring the Increase of Medicaid Rates for Complex Care Needs

OACB opposes the House's removal of funding that would incentivize providers to serve more people with complex care needs. People with complex care needs are those who are dependent upon others in all areas of daily living – for example, people who are unable to feed, dress, or bathe themselves.

This provision supports the sustainability of our system by providing critical funding in an area where it will have a major and immediate impact – promoting the continuity, predictability, and longevity of providers in the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Failing to address quality-of-life issues for people with developmental disabilities who have complex care needs is the wrong policy direction for Ohio. This provision costs \$10.8 million (\$4.1 million state share) in 2018 and \$12.9 million (\$4.9 million state share) in 2019.

Support: Restoring Appropriations in Non-GRF ICF Bed Tax Line Item

OACB opposes the House's decision to reduce appropriations in the non-GRF Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) Bed Tax Line Item and in the corresponding Federal Medicaid Services Line Item in FY18. These reductions did not reduce the actual amount of Bed Tax funds but limited the DODD's ability to spend from this line item. This reduction prevents DODD from identifying service gaps or cost-saving service alternatives and attempting to address them. OACB supports an amendment to restore the non-GRF appropriation authority and corresponding federal Medicaid reimbursement line. The remedy would be to restore spending authority for \$9,558,148 in non-GRF line 653606 and \$15,594,873 in the federal Medicaid Services line 653654 in FY18.

Support: Amending Provider Compliance Language

The State of Ohio and county boards of DD have moral, ethical, and legal obligations to protect the health and safety of people with developmental disabilities. As county boards of DD continue to transition out of providing waiver services, county boards and providers must cooperate in unprecedented ways to ensure people with DD can live safely within the community. For the past several months, OACB has been working with provider organizations and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities on ways that county boards can both (1) support providers with training and technical assistance, and (2) ensure providers are protecting the health and safety of the individuals they serve through enhanced oversight authority. As a result, we support amending the provider compliance language that was added to the substitute bill in the House in order to address concerns with this language.

Conclusion

We understand the Ohio General Assembly has difficult decisions to make in this budget with tax revenues projected to be lower than originally anticipated. The fact remains, however, that people with developmental disabilities and their families are facing a time of great uncertainty and upheaval as Ohio's DD system undergoes transformation, and we must ensure that necessary services for people with developmental disabilities are maintained well into the future.

Thank you for your time and attention on these matters. We look forward to continuing to work together to address these concerns. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.