



Ohio Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee

May 24, 2017

Testimony from Sara Junk,

Chair of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS)

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on HB 49, specifically in regards to Adult Protective Services, the issues and the funding problems that plague the State, the workers and the elderly population in each and every county.

I am Sara Junk, Chair of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS). I have been involved in OCAPS for over a decade and a hands-on worker and supervisor for Adult Protective Services (APS) in Pike County for even longer. Never in my years of being involved in APS work have the referrals been so high in number, the situations our elders face been so dangerous and intricate, and the need for more workers to help investigate and work to protect our elderly been so dire as now.

OCAPS is appreciative of the modest increase in adult protective services in the House version of the budget bill, particularly when we know the General Assembly has hard decisions to make in this budget cycle.

However, right now, throughout Ohio, there are many counties that do not have even one worker dedicated to APS, and even with the \$250,000 per year increase, the allocation divided among 88 counties is still not enough to accomplish that goal.

Often, the responsibility for providing adult protective services for those who are 60 and older has been passed off to already strained Child Protective Services workers. This is unfair to both the workers and to the elderly. While there are some similarities between these two protective programs, there are significant differences. The State, the counties and the elderly are desperately in need of some help in the form of at least one full-time and trained APS worker for each and every county in order to effectively address the current needs levels.

Changes to the APS law in the last budget helped counties to build some infrastructure. However, these changes have put greater demand on these strained and often totally maxed out services such that counties must continually rely on local funding (for those counties that are fortunate enough to have such) in order to do the bare minimum for our seniors.

In my tenure as Social Services Supervisor over APS I have seen funding for my county be as low as less than \$2000 for an entire year (my county has over 4000 elderly residents) to the current allotment of \$30,000. This is a great improvement for which I am grateful. However, even at that rate, there is not enough to completely fund one full-time worker in my county: I have 3 workers who are spread thin over 7 different programs. Ohio now has required that there be infrastructure

in place, which I enthusiastically applaud, but I am now asking that the investment into the program be sufficient so that the infrastructure is functional and sustainable.

One example is that each county establish interdisciplinary teams (I-Teams) that bring together APS, law enforcement, the courts, and social services, at a minimum, to engage in case reviews and identify gaps and resources. I-Teams are an incredibly useful tool to help counties with educating all agencies that are dealing with elder abuse or its effects, but it takes time to develop relationships and establish the commitment among agencies to attend meetings and share resources.

Ohio should be investing at least \$65,000 per county each year into providing protective services to our vulnerable elderly population. This amount would ensure quality core services are available in each and every county, regardless of availability (or unavailability) of local funds.

OCAPS supports APS funding of at least \$10 million per year, to include the \$65,000 base amount per county, but also additional funds that could be distributed by formula that can support staff, further outreach and education, and provide funds for supportive services to immediately stabilize victims of abuse and neglect.

APS is at a critical point for Ohio. Older adults are increasingly victims of exploitation and abuse as a result of the opiate epidemic. On a recent survey over 80% of county department respondents indicated an increase in APS referrals just in the past two years, and over 40% have seen that increase continue within the past six months. In addition, over 40% of county departments have seen an increase in APS referrals directly attributable to opiate abuse. Now more than ever counties need to have the capacity to be able to respond to requests for help from Ohio's seniors.

OCAPS has been working hard to provide training and guidance to achieve continuity of services and best practices throughout the State. We are a large coalition and are proud to be the longest existing statewide coalition in Ohio. OCAPS and all its members strongly urge you to consider the thousands of elderly victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation as you develop laws, protocol and funding streams for the APS programs. Without increased state support, including reasonable funding, Ohio will continue to struggle to provide much-needed assistance to our elderly.

Also, the House-passed budget incorporated House Bill 78 into the legislation which would make numerous changes to the APS program. While we support many of the provisions of the bill there are also some significant concerns which need to be resolved. We would recommend pulling this language from the budget and allowing HB 78 to be fully vetted through the committee process.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

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