



Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

House Bill 166 – Interested Party

Matt Old, Erie County Commissioner

May 15, 2019

Good morning Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Matt Old and I currently serve as an Erie County Commissioner.

I'm here to talk to you today about the many human services programs counties provide Ohioans as they relate to the state biennial budget, House Bill 166.

One of the most difficult tasks facing counties today is the administration of services for children who are abused or neglected. The fallout from the opiate crisis has put immense pressures on the child protective system. Annual costs of placing children in foster care has risen by \$53 million to \$384 million in two short years, even as more children were being placed with kin in unpaid settings. Once the children enter county care, they often require longer placements and additional services to cope with the trauma they have experienced. Many cases are also traumatic for our child protective caseworkers and, as a result, we are experiencing higher than normal turnover and a workforce shortage. The complexities of this crisis are eating away at county resources; even counties who have successfully passed children services levies are struggling to provide the required resources.

HB 166 in its current form makes significant funding increases to the state child protective system by providing an additional \$60 million per year for the state child protection allocation. CCAO supports this investment in our children. The flexibility of these dollars will help us address the rising costs of child placement and retain our most valuable asset – our case workers who are on the front lines everyday protecting Ohio's children.

The bill currently contains language that would create a maintenance of effort (MOE) for the county share of children services funding. The Department of Job and Family Services director would have rulemaking authority regarding the MOE and the department would set the amount each county has to contribute to its children services fund. In the past, CCAO has opposed such provisions. However, recognizing that Governor DeWine has taken great steps with these funds to strengthen the state-county partnership, CCAO has been working with the department on compromise language. The compromise language being discussed would be moved to temporary law and ensure the MOE only applies if the state investment in the state child protection



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allocation exceeds FY19 levels. CCAO is also having conversations with the department relating to details about how to calculate the MOE as well as the corrective action for a county that does not meet its MOE. If the new MOE language is added to the bill and these conversations remain constructive, CCAO will remain neutral on this provision.

Additionally, CCAO appreciates the investment in multi-system youth in HB 166. We support the \$25 million for placement costs of multi-system youth in our public children services agencies or at risk of entering into the children services system. Many of our county agencies have experienced pressures from the high cost of room and board, which is not covered by insurance, for children with needs across systems. This funding would help alleviate some of those pressures.

The governor's version of the budget included \$15 million in TANF funds for the Kinship Caregiver Program. Without this funding, the program will sunset on June 30th. To avoid gaps in funding, CCAO respectfully requests that this provision be restored in the Senate.

CCAO supports the House's additional investment of \$1.49 million in adult protective services (APS). Counties provide a uniform APS program for older adults who require protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. CCAO supports increasing the state contribution to APS to cover at least one full time APS caseworker per county. An additional \$1.63 million added to the current appropriation would give each county \$65,000 to accomplish that goal.

HB 166 retains FY19 levels of investment for the state match allocation to county child support enforcement agencies. CCAO supports a \$3 million increase to this allocation, which would restore the 1.5% cut this line item sustained in the previous biennium and provide a 1.02% COLA from FY12. One in three Ohio children are impacted by our child support system, and the services our child support enforcement agencies provide them is essential.

CCAO supports the significant investments made in the crisis stabilization funds housed with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The flexibility of these funds is crucial, as counties have drastically different needs relating to mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery across the state.

HB 166 retains FY19 levels of funding for family and children first councils (FCFCs). These councils work to reduce duplication of services and to help families navigate health, social, and human services. In order to perform these functions, regardless of size, each county was allocated \$20,000. This amount was decreased in FY10 to \$15,750 per county. The councils serve a crucial role in administratively coordinating services for children in our counties. CCAO supports an increase in the annual allocation to councils to bring FCFCs to \$30,000 per county. The bill also allows the continuation of family and children first flexible spending pools, which will provide flexibility for our counties.

CCAO is supportive of the \$1 million increase in funding for the Bureau of Children with Medical Handicaps program.

As you discuss the priorities for Ohio's operating budget for this biennium, CCAO believes it is essential for the General Assembly to consider and preserve these investments in crucial services provided to Ohioans. I thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions.