

Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee
Wednesday, May 15, 2019
House Bill 166 – Increase Adult Protective Services Funding
Proponent Testimony

My name is Phyllis Carlson-Riehm and I represent ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women, a statewide domestic violence coalition. My testimony is in support of the Adult Protective Services line item, which was increased from \$31,000 for each Ohio county in the Governor’s budget to over \$48,000 per county in the House budget.

Domestic violence victims in Ohio have the benefit of more than 60 domestic violence shelters in the state. And even though shelters aren’t located in each county, each county is served by at least one DV shelter.

DV shelters typically limit their residents to *victims of intimate partner violence in imminent danger*, but for victims who qualify, they provide a range of services in addition to safe shelter, such as counseling and support groups, legal advocacy and accompaniment to court as well as support services for the children who accompany them.

Elder abuse victims in the community are only eligible for DV shelter services if they meet the same criteria as younger victims – *victimization by an intimate partner and evidence that they are in imminent danger*. This criteria eliminates access to domestic violence shelters for many, if not most, elder abuse victims. Another barrier for elder abuse victims can be their physical limitations and health care concerns. The shelter building may be inadequate to accommodate an elder and staff are not typically trained in the special needs of elder abuse victims. Consequently, Adult Protective Services in Ohio is clearly the main source of help for elder abuse victims. As a result, it is critical that Ohio counties receive adequate state funding to serve elder abuse victims.

Because the current funding level is less than the amount to hire one employee, clearly it is inadequate to serve a county’s elder abuse victims. Consequently, highly populated counties with a strong tax base resort to raising supplemental funds from local or county levies. But, unfortunately, many Ohio counties are rural with small towns and villages, without the necessary tax base to generate adequate funds or the willingness of cash-strapped residents to raise their own taxes. In those counties, typically a child protective services worker will also be given responsibility to serve elder abuse victims. Although this may be the only alternative, it is unfair to the worker, who has not been trained to serve elder abuse victims, nor to the elder victims who deserve services that are tailored to meet their needs and unique vulnerabilities.

Please support raising the Adult Protective Services line item to the level that will provide \$65,000 per county in order to provide one full-time APS worker’s salary and benefits. All Ohio’s elders deserve protection and safety from abuse.

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