

**Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid
Siemer Institute Testimony
Thursday, May 16, 2019**

Good morning, Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Thomas and members of the committee. My name is Ryan Brooks and I serve as the Chief Operating Officer of the Siemer Institute. Our work is rooted in research that indicates that disruption and changes to where a child lives or attends school causes that child to fall behind and makes them less likely to graduate. In 2011, philanthropist Al and Barb Siemer launched the Institute with the mission to enhance educational opportunities for school-aged children by preventing family homelessness and reducing school instability nationwide.

Since 2011, the Institute has developed partnerships with the United Way's in more than 50 communities across the country. Our network actively participates in a collective impact model while sharing best practices that align successes with the intent of creating national change. The Institute currently partners with five United Ways in Ohio (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo) to oversee family stability programs that function as an early intervention for children susceptible to becoming multi-system youth.

The programs we fund target families with school-age children that are at risk of becoming homeless by focusing on housing stability, increasing income, reducing school mobility and providing two-generation programming to help families stabilize and thrive. This investment not only produces tangible benefits for the students and families involved, it saves the system money overall by reducing the number of children who require greater, and more expensive, intervention and lifts families out of poverty.

Case management lies at the foundation of our programs. Families meet one-on-one with a trusted, compassionate professional who works to guide them out of crisis and into stability. Case managers work intensely with families for up to 18 months to create a plan for the family to stabilize and thrive. We promote a two-generation approaches that meet the needs of children and adults simultaneously to foster academic success and break the cycle of poverty. We focus on the entire family and align services that meet their needs to support their success.

In each of the five Ohio communities, programs designed and managed by the local United Way, allow direct services to be provided by the strongest nonprofit partners in

their communities. Each program is unique, but they all work toward the same goals – stable housing, stable schooling, and higher income.

In 2018, Siemer Institute supported programs across Ohio served 884 families with 2,271 children. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of families obtained or maintained stable housing. Nearly 54 percent of families increased their incomes to a more sustainable level. Finally, 98.5 percent of families were able to avoid unplanned, disruptive school moves. Together, these results suggest that supporting families in a holistic manner before they lose their housing is an effective at helping them achieve lasting stability.

Given the demonstrable success these efforts have generated, we are constantly looking for partners and additional funding to further our reach and create a greater impact. Because our programing keeps children in school and on a path to graduation, we reduce the need for other community services and forms of aid. As a result, money spent on these efforts not only improves the lives of those being served, it frees up resources by reducing the number of children and families that may need to engage multi-system youth programs.

We would therefore respectfully request consideration of funding through the TANF Block Grant line item to help us expand our mission and reach more children and families. Our programs directly advance the enumerated purposes of TANF, especially by reducing the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage. In fact, over fifty percent of families that engage with our programing see an increase in household income. As a result, we are confident we would be able to leverage the funds to better serve our targeted population while also ensuring these families and children are less dependent on other governmental and non-profit support systems. We also intend to match every dollar of TANF funding received with foundation support and other private contributions to further amplify the effect of any funding.

I appreciate your time and consideration of our request. I am happy to answer any questions.