

NORTHERN OHIOANS FOR BUDGET LEGISLATION EQUALITY/NOBLE

May 16, 2019

Testimony: Senate Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

Chairman Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on HB 166. My name is Gail Long and I am a member of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality. NOBLE is a community organization made up of individuals and organizations who feel that it is important to bring the voices of low income Ohioans to the Biennium Budget debate. We have been in existence since 2003 and have made it a point to communicate directly with elected officials both here and in their districts through face to face contact, electronically and in writing.

I am focusing my remarks today on Child Day Care and Community Based Senior Services. Prior to retiring in 2006, I worked for nearly 30 years for a neighborhood center on the west side of Cleveland. This center, Merrick House, had both a child day care (we were the first center in Cleveland to serve infants) and a senior center. Today the child care center is a Step-Up To Quality Five Star rated program and the senior program merged with the center at West Side Community House.

Access to quality child care is essential if parents are able to go to work and feel that their children are in a safe, educational environment. The Governor put in his proposed budget funds that will help to assure quality by increasing center per diems. This is a good move. However, it did not increase access to child care services. HB 166, which you are now debating, also does not include increased access to quality childcare services. What

will increase access to services for low and working class families is an increase in the subsidy level which now stands at 130% of the federal poverty guideline. This is \$32,630 for a family of four. Governor DeWine campaigned on raising the eligibility level to 150% of the federal poverty guideline or \$37,650 for a family of four. The NOBLE platform supports raising the eligibility level to 200% of the FPL. Raising the eligibility level to what the governor supported while campaigning would potentially add 6,000 families to the program. At one time the State's eligibility level was at 185% of the FPL. It makes good economic sense to raise the current level to at least 150% of the FPL. The more parents that work, the more taxable income comes into the state. In addition, the more parents that feel that they can afford to send their children to a safe, educational childcare environment will do so rather than have them watched by an older brother or sister or neighbor or relative who has no training.

Community based senior centers are the lifeline for thousands of elderly Ohioans. Access to programs that include transportation, home delivered meals, congregate meals, socialization and adult day care help seniors to remain independent for as long as they are able. Senior centers take people shopping, get to and from the center, and provide socialization experiences such as holiday parties and birthday parties, access to computers, and one nutritional meal 5 days a week. HB 166 increases Senior Community Services by over \$2 million a year. However, this goes entirely to the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program. While we support this increase, we also support the recommendation by Area Agencies on Aging that Senior Community Services be increased from \$8.1 to \$10 million per year so that Community Based Senior Services can offer their services to an ever increasing senior population.

Finally, NOBLE supports the Sub-bill 166's proposed increase in funding for Adult Protective Services to \$10 million dollars a year. This will insure that Counties will be able to tackle the numerous tasks necessary to protect the State's elderly population.

Thank you...