**NORTHERN OHIOANS FOR BUDGET LEGISLATION EQUALITY/NOBLE**

**May 28, 2019**

**WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY**

**Testimony: Senate Finance Committee**

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance 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…