



Barbara Riley, chair  
ohagingadvocacy@gmail.com  
facebook.com/ohioagingadvocacycoalition  
@ohagingadvocacy

**Testimony of Barbara Riley, Chair, Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition  
March 2, 2021  
Ohio House of Representatives  
Finance Committee**

Chair Oelslager, Ranking Member Cawley, Members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, we appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in regard to HB 110. I am Barbara Riley, Chair of the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition, a group of seniors and their caregivers who have come together to make certain that the voice of Ohio's seniors is heard in the development of public policy affecting us. As some of you know, I previously served as both the Director of the Ohio Department of Aging and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services; and in those positions I became acutely aware of the surging social and financial costs of our increasing aging population. I am not going to report to you on those statistics as they are readily available through the Miami University Scripps Gerontology Center; rather I would like to focus on the very real ramifications to seniors and their caregivers of the provisions in HB 110.

- **We request that the current 4% increase in reimbursement for home and community based services in the Medicaid line item 651-525 be set at 5% in each fiscal year.**

The PASSORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waivers are within this line item, and have been seriously underfunded for many years. We ask that you also include language that the increase would be directed to assuring that a qualified, trained, and sufficient work force is available to provide the necessary services.

Currently the ability of we older Ohioans to remain in our own homes, where we are healthier and happier, is adversely affected by the fact that the individuals who provide home care services do not earn a wage sufficient to attract and retain the best qualified staff. We currently have waiting lists for the Medicaid Waivers, often due to the inability of HCBS providers to hire and keep qualified staff. Waiting lists for the waivers mean that we end up in far more costly settings that we neither need nor want. This is unconscionable when a remedy is readily available.

- **The Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition is asking that you increase the appropriations for Senior Community Services to at least \$10 million per year. ALL 490-411 is used to provide services such as transportation, meals, and personal care services. In 2001 this line item was funded at \$16 million. Our needs and numbers have not decreased, they have increased!**

Over the years I have referred to this line item as "Medicaid Prevention Funding", as it provides services to those of us who are not yet Medicaid eligible. By doing so we are able to stay in our own homes and communities and avoid costly out of home care which drives us to Medicaid eligibility. In the last budget the increase provided in this line was used for the Senior Farmers Market, which was far too restrictive to be of real benefit to the majority of us needing assistance with things such as transportation to a doctor, a home delivered meal, an aide to help keep our home clean, someone to cook a meal, etc. We ask that you fund this line with at least \$10 million and stipulate that the funds be more widely available to Area Agencies on Aging to distribute as necessary.

- **Lastly, The Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition asks you to clarify how the \$50 million in Nursing Home Reform will be spent, and to make home and community based care a priority.**

The stated desired outcome is to better balance the Ohio long term care system, and my preceding requests make it clear that two areas needing to be addressed are reimbursement for Home and Community Based Care and restoration of the Community Services line item in Aging to the 2001 level. These alone could better balance the system.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions. Please feel free to contact me at [rileyber66@gmail.com](mailto:rileyber66@gmail.com).