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Ohio House of Representatives
House Finance Committee
House Bill 110
Diana King
NOBLE
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Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 110, Ohio's FY 2022-2023 budget bill.

My name is Diana King, and I am the chairwoman of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality. NOBLE is a coalition of individuals and organizations advocating for ourselves and others who are consumers of State Health and Human Services programs. Our coalition consists of many folks that are low-income citizens and most impacted by cuts or negative changes at the State, local and Federal levels to such programs as Medicaid and SNAP, just to name a few. Members of NOBLE feel that it is important to bring the voices of low-income Ohioans to the Biennium Budget debate, which is the reason for providing this testimony.

At least 971,000 Ohioans have contracted the coronavirus and at least 16,000 have died. In addition, an unprecedented number of Ohioans have filed for unemployment since the pandemic emerged over a year ago. Others are front line, "essential" workers who make low wages and struggle to afford childcare, especially as many schools and daycare centers have been disrupted. Illness and loss of income have disproportionately harmed Ohioans of color.

To address the pandemic recession, NOBLE recommends that the legislature make the following investments in HB 110:

- \$93 million should be provided to local public health agencies to assist in building core capacity in this year of crisis, and for the future.
- \$45 million per year should be allocated for food banks to ensure everyone gets enough to eat.
- \$25 million should be allocated from federal "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families" (TANF) funds to prevent homelessness.
- \$50 million in one-time emergency assistance should be allocated from TANF funds to provide direct support to Ohioans.

- Efforts should be made to protect the health of all communities through vaccination education and outreach and additional vaccine distribution and COVID testing sites to serve low-income and rural communities.

In addition to addressing the pandemic in the budget, NOBLE suggests that the legislature aim to expand health care and restore Ohio's public health system. Many Ohioans do not have the care they need to keep them healthy and treat them if they get sick, especially today. Many have been laid off and lost health insurance coverage. Medicaid has never been more important. In this year of pandemic, with rising illness, suffering and death from COVID, lawmakers must protect Medicaid and related health services.

To Expand health care and restore Ohio's public health system, NOBLE recommends the following for HB 110:

- Medicaid Expansion should be maintained at 138% of the Federal Poverty Level without qualifications.
- Services and funding should be maintained for traditional Medicaid, excluding any mandatory work requirements.
- Fully restore state funding for community mental health and addiction services to control Ohio's rising addiction epidemic.
- Build a health care workforce the community will trust through loan forgiveness programs targeted to Black and brown students in health care.
- Direct \$7.8 million to create a state "Points of Access" grant program to expand health programs in Ohio's Black, Brown and Indigenous communities.

Lastly, we ask that in crafting the state budget, that the legislature prioritize strengthening Ohio's communities. For the past 15 years tax cuts and tax breaks have been prioritized in the budget process, this has ultimately contributed to inflation which has in turn eroded many public services.

NOBLE suggests that the legislature, starting with this budget, HB 110, lay the groundwork to phase-in restoration of underfunded, foundational services listed here:

- Ensure an excellent school in every zip code by leveraging \$1.9 billion in public resources to fund K-12 education equitably and sufficiently.
- Give more 3- and 4-year-olds from families with low incomes a good start with an additional \$130.7 million for early education.
- Eligibility for childcare assistance should be 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Help more Ohioans get a degree by increasing funding for higher education by at least \$415 million.
- Help local governments provide key services by restoring state revenue sharing to previous level of 3.68% of state general revenue.
- Make all homes lead safe by increasing funding for lead-free initiatives, including through the State Children's Health Initiative Program (SCHIP) and the Ohio Department of Health.

- Increase mobility and expand opportunity with \$150 million yearly for public transit and transportation alternatives.
- Give people who are underpaid an income boost by directing \$207 million to rebalance Ohio's unfair tax structure with an improved EITC.

Many Ohioans were struggling to make ends meet and find opportunities even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Now, those existing problems have only been amplified. With programs like those mentioned above, we can provide additional safety and security for Ohio families, and allow us to come out of this pandemic stronger than ever.

Respectfully,

Diana King, Chair