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Ohio House of Representatives
House Finance Committee

HB 110

Testimony

March 11, 2021

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Gail Long and I am a member of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality/NOBLE. NOBLE is a coalition of organizations and individuals working to bring the voices of low-income individuals to the State's Biennium Budget process. We have since 2003 worked to improve and protect health and human services that work to steady the lives of people as they struggle to make a living, educate their children, and survive the ups and downs of everyday existence.

NOBLE is asking that you increase the Child Care Subsidy to 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline which in 2021 is \$43,920 for a family of three (3). While we commend Governor DeWine for proposing an increase from 130% to 138%, this needs to be higher. I'm sure that I can safely say that all of us want to see all people who are able to, work. We also all want to see strong, healthy families. Childcare along with transportation are the two highest expenses for working parents. By expanding the subsidy to 200% of the FPG, more parents will be able to work without worrying about childcare. In addition to increasing the Subsidy, we ask that you make it available to parents who are between jobs or on maternity leave. Finally, so as to protect the educational achievements for children, we ask that you guarantee childcare subsidy eligibility for parents for 12 months after they become ineligible. Childcare services ensure a safe, educational environment for children while their parents are working.

In nearly all budget debates, we have brought to your attention the importance of moving Adult Protective Services from an un-funded mandate to one that supports each and every County's ability to identify seniors who are being abused and neglected. You have put money into this program, but it is by no means fully funded. We have asked you to fully match Older Americans Act dollars to the state so that we can maximize home delivered meals, adult day care services, transportation, and socialization. As our State ages, these services become increasingly more important. It is much less expensive and more desirable for those of us who are elderly to age at home rather than in a long-term care institution if at all possible.

More recently, we have raised the issue of Kinship care with you. The opioid epidemic has put increased pressure on family members to care for a loved ones' children. Grandparents, uncle and aunts, sisters and brothers have all become kinship care providers. While county child welfare agencies prioritize placing children with a relative or family friend, a child placed with a relative generally receives less financial support from the state than a child placed with a licensed foster parent. This is not right and

NOBLE advocates for equity. Being a kinship care provider does not mean that your expenses are less than they are for a traditional foster parent. These expenses are the same.

Finally, we urge you to protect Medicaid and Medicaid Expansion. During the pandemic and the expansion of the opioid epidemic, Medicaid and Medicaid Expansion have saved lives. Ohio should be commended for its willingness to continue to fund one of the best Medicaid programs in the Country. In addition, do not make any cuts to food assistance, rather, increase your annual allocation to \$45 million per year. We are not out of the woods yet when it comes to the pandemic. We are just beginning to see the lifting of some restrictions, but it will be a while before we see whether or not this will help to get people back to work. Additionally, the economic fallout caused by the global pandemic will continue to be felt long after the virus itself is under control. In the meantime, food banks must be able to meet the needs faced by families facing food insecurity.

Thank you and NOBLE urges you to make decisions in the best interest of the citizens of this state.

Respectfully,

Gail Long