

**House Finance Health & Human Services Subcommittee**  
**HB 33 - Ohio Association of Senior Centers (OASC)**  
**Proponent Testimony**  
**Denise Niese, OASC Past President**  
**Executive Director, Wood County Committee on Aging**  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023**

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Minority Member Liston and Members of the Ohio House Finance Health & Human Services Subcommittee:

I am Denise Niese, Executive Director of the Wood County Committee on Aging. It is my privilege to serve on the Ohio Association of Senior Centers Board, advocating for issues that impact the lives of 2.8 million older adults, as well as their families, caregivers, and communities who call Ohio home.

When analyzing the Ohio Department of Aging's budget request, we were pleased that HB 33 contains provisions that will improve the quality of life for Ohio's Aging Population. Ohio's Senior Centers are integral components of the state's aging network by providing direct services that help older adults remain in their own homes. We are the boots on the ground, locally based, delivering nutrition, transportation, evidenced based, minor home modifications and support services for older Ohioans.

We support the Ohio Department of Aging budget request and in particular the proposed Healthy Aging Grants intended for local communities distributed through the Boards of County Commissioners. This is a proven effective model for tailoring aging services to local needs through locally supported Senior Levies and Senior Centers.

I want to share with you the local impact of the dollars that are provided through this budget.

Home delivered meals go beyond the nutritional benefits. Within the past month, two volunteers delivering meals to people in Wood County noticed health problems and reported the seniors needed medical assistance.

On Jan. 18, Patricia McCutchan-Vernier was dropping off food to one of her regulars, when she noticed something wasn't right. When she came to the door, she just looked jaundiced," she said. "She was acting fine and didn't seem to be in any pain."

But McCutchan-Vernier, a retired physician who has been delivering meals for about five years, reported her concerns to the director of food service, Angie Bradford, at the Wood County Committee on Aging.

Bradford called the woman's son, who went over to check on his mom, who still felt fine but was "very yellow." He took her to the emergency room, where it was discovered that she had a clogged bile duct. The woman had surgery the following day to remove the blockage.

McCutchan-Vernier, whose delivery route has 26-30 seniors, realizes her volunteer role is about more than a hot lunch. And it gives the Wood County Committee on Aging a set of eyes in each home every weekday to make sure meal recipients are safe.

On Feb. 6, another Wood County volunteer was delivering food to a home of an older adult who had fallen. The volunteer called 911 for emergency medical aid.

While both of these instances occurred in Wood County, these situations occur throughout the State and are the reason that home and community based services are so very essential for Ohio's growing older adult population.

The investment by the State, the Federal Older American's Act, and local government that support the Senior Centers changes lives and protects the older adults throughout our communities.

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Minority Member Liston and Members of the Ohio House Finance Health & Human Services Subcommittee, I urge you to support the Department of Aging budget to continue this investment and enhance it through the Healthy Aging Grants.

Thank you for your dedication to the older adults of our State.