



Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council

**Proponent Testimony on HB33  
House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services**

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for reviewing this testimony on HB33. My name is Jeremy Morris and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (Ohio SILC). I am submitting this testimony to discuss the potential impact of the Ohio Department of Aging's Healthy Aging Grant.

The Ohio SILC is a State affiliated Council that promotes independence and inclusion for individuals with significant disabilities across the State of Ohio. As part of our work, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss legislation that impacts the community of persons with disabilities in Ohio and to be a resource to the General Assembly as they consider this budget and the impacts to individuals with disabilities across the state.

As we all know, Ohio's aging population is growing and many of these individuals also experience some form of disability. The bold and innovative strategy of this project as proposed in the Ohio Department of Aging's budget represents the State of Ohio recognizing the substantial needs of those individuals that are at risk of losing their independence, do not qualify for assistance programs, and need some additional support.

With this project, not only will thousands of individuals be positively impacted but it also ensures that individuals across the entire state have access to locally responsive services and supports as it will be distributed throughout all 88 counties. These one-time funds will reduce reliance on our State Medicaid program. Ohioans being able to age in their own homes with services instead of admissions to nursing and long term care facilities has proven to reduce cost to our State Medicaid program.

Without Healthy Aging Grants, health and long-term needs become so great that personal and family resources are depleted, Medicaid becomes the dominant fall back for many. Ohioans must become impoverished to receive assistance through the current Medicaid system. By promoting health and access to care in the community, in return creates cost savings for the counties and the state. The Healthy Aging Grants will also free up existing county dollars being used to fund existing programs in-line with Healthy Aging's goals.

Maintaining independence is not just about living in one's own home, but also about having access to the resources and services that promote a high quality of life. Through Healthy Aging Grants, Ohioans can access various services such as transportation, home modifications, respite, and more to live more healthy and fulfilled lives longer in their own homes. Furthermore, flexible management of these grants allows counties to tailor programs to their communities needs and ensuring that resources are

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being used effectively and efficiently. This is paramount to success of aging Ohioans to not have the one size fits all services but access the services they truly need to sustain independence at home.

Utilizing these funds in creative ways at a local level allow Ohioans to be in more control of their own lives and independence. Small investments like these in local communities make a profound impact in reductions in unnecessary hospitalizations, falls, and home accidents for our aging Ohioans and will result in greater quality of life.

We respectfully ask that you retain this provision in the budget so that our local communities can work on strategic proposals to support our aging Ohioans.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Morris  
Executive Director

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