



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE FINACE SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF TANF ALLOCATION  
REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES**

**Wednesday 22 MAR 2023 Jim Trakas, Legislative Agent**

Good morning, Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Jim Trakas, and I am the legislative agent for University Settlement the oldest community not for profit charitable organization in Cleveland's Slavic Village, the poorest neighborhood in the city.

For over 20 years, University Settlement's Community Based Services (CBS) program has offered families a strength-based approach by providing advocacy, linkages, referrals, and resources within the community where the family resides. University Settlement receives over 90% of its funding from private, corporate, or other not for profit sources. Our programs support all aspects of the community from families, children, senior citizen and general services for over 10,000 individuals in the neighborhood.

For the past two General Assemblies, you have funded LI 600689 to set aside TANF funds in the amount of \$100,000 annually to support a community based program called Family to Family Community Based Services. This program supports families who are involved with, or who are at risk of becoming involved with, the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Through both one-time assistance and long-term case management, staff work with families to ensure that parents acquire the skills and resources necessary to keep their children in their homes. Referrals for the program are submitted by DCFS, community agencies/partners, schools, or a self-referral (walk-in). Referrals come from families of various racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

For program year 2022, 309 families were served using this program both referrals and walk in referrals. University Settlement staff provide these services in support of the program:

## **Team Decision Meetings (TDMs)**

Team Decision Meetings involve the family, the Collaborative, and other professionals to discuss the safety and welfare of the children. These meetings are held once a call to the hotline (216-696-KIDS) has been deemed substantiated and there is cause for concern. The parties meet to discuss the event(s) that warranted the call, develop a plan, and address any needs that the family has identified. In this setting, US is known as the Broadway Collaborative. The role of the collaborative is to provide advocacy and support to the family. The expectation for TDMs deliverable is a 90% attendance rate. In 2022, the program achieved an overall 93% attendance rate.

## **Family Visitations**

When children have been removed from their home due to abuse or neglect, most parents are granted weekly visitation with their children to maintain their bond. University Settlement hosts family visits in family-friendly spaces. The spaces are equipped with toys, games, books, and other essentials to foster family engagement.

Expectations of the program include: Engaging the community and conducting assessments, keeping families together and stable by case plans and supervision, increasing family wellbeing by following the prescribed plans, and offering strong community resources both private and public to address needs to support the family. In 2022, the TANF funds were used efficiently, at \$323.64 per family, quite the bargain if you think about it.

We are respectfully requesting a continuance of this program by a modest inflationary increase in this General Assembly of \$108,000 in FY24 and \$114,480 FY25 in a non-GRF TANF Allocation in your Committee Report to be incorporated into H.B. 33.

Thank you for any consideration of this request and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for your leadership and work on behalf of the people of Ohio.