



**PARMA COMMISSION ON AGING (PCOA)
DONNA SMALLWOOD ACTIVITIES CENTER**
7010 Powers Boulevard ♦ Parma, Ohio 44129

TESTIMONY SUB. H.B. No. 33 ♦ Ohio Senate Finance Committee

ERIN LALLY, Director
*Donna Smallwood Senior Center
City of Parma*

JULIA VARLEY, President
*Parma Commission on Aging
Nonprofit 501c3*

Chairman Dolan and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Erin Lally and I am the director of the senior center in the City of Parma. I also had the distinct honor of serving in the Ohio House for two terms back at the turn of the century and was a member of the finance committee. Today, I am here with my sidekick Julia Varley, president of the nonprofit arm of our senior center, the Parma Commission on Aging (PCOA), that was established in 1984.

We are here to request a one-time \$50,000 line item to the PCOA for a preliminary improvement study to our facility, built 31 years ago without any age-friendly updates. The goal of this study is provide to short-term and long-term improvement planning so that our facility can age with the population we serve. Examples of what we hope to accomplish include additional handicapped accessible and bathroom safety upgrades.

I have been post-pandemic director since September, 2021, and what I can tell you is that our older adult population is thriving. We have over 100 people a day coming in person to our Center to take advantage of our YMCA satellite branch, lunch, transportation, human and social services as well as a myriad of value-added programming with community partners. Our most valuable partner is the Parma Commission on Aging which supplements our ability to serve by providing funding. In 2022, the PCOA raised \$30,000 and YTD they have garnered \$14,000. Julia Varley is here to share with you how valuable our request for this investment is.

Chairman Dolan and Committee Members,

My name is Julia Varley and I have been a member of the Donna Smallwood senior center for nine years. I met my partner Warren through a grief support group run by the staff social worker and both literally changed my life. As a way of expressing gratitude, I ran for and was elected to preside over the nonprofit Parma Commission on Aging in 2019.

Needless to say, we were inactive during the worst of the pandemic until the Center re-opened in 2021 and this whirlwind director came aboard. Since just last year, we have welcomed almost 400 new members from

our city and surrounding communities and over 19,000 older adults have come through our doors. Others may call it crazy busy but we call it uplifting service. Together, Erin and I have planned numerous activities and fundraisers to continue providing an array of interesting and new community partnerships.

(Erin) We have had Cuyahoga Community College teach Encore 55 classes at our Center. We have a wildly popular dance every month with either a live band or DJ. We purchased the installation equipment for two new smart TVs and sound bars that were recently donated to us by a community partner. We have a new social and educational group, Our Veterans, who have over 60 members attending each month. We support arts and culture activities as well as technology training, lifelong learning, and most importantly, health and wellness.

(Julia) Erin mentioned that we provide funds to the Center. We hosted our very first rummage sale last month that was a huge success and last year, we had a citywide shoe drive. We were able to purchase Kindle tablets for homebound residents who do not have a smartphone or computer at home, provide one-on-one technology training (in homes with seniors training seniors and at the library with technology trainers), and in some cases, we included one year of free internet service. We are also providing the 20% match to purchase a new car for our transportation department which provides rides to medical appointments and grocery stores *and* we deliver about 30,000 meals a year.

(Erin) All this is to say that we are incredibly busy providing older adults the services and social opportunities they need to feel connected to our community and one another. I want to assure you that your investment in us is a sound one. Our preliminary improvement study will launch us into a planning phase to be able to age with our population.

(Julia) What we imagine is a plan to add additional handicapped accessibility and safety grab bars to our bathrooms, to see if we can utilize our space more efficiently to accommodate our aging needs, and to continue to provide a safe, enjoyable and valuable space for our aging population.

(Erin) Attached are letters of support for this funding from our local community partners, Parma Mayor Tim DeGeeter, the YMCA, Cuyahoga County Public Library and *(Cuyahoga Community College)*.

**On behalf of the older adult population we serve, we sincerely appreciate your consideration and support.
Thank you.**

TIM DEGEETER
MAYOR

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6611 Ridge Road
Parma, Ohio 44129

440-885-8001
Fax: 440-885-8012

May 16, 2023

Honorable State Legislators,

This is a letter of support for the Parma Commission on Aging's request for funding a Preliminary Improvement Study at our Donna Smallwood Activities Center.

This month, we replaced seven (7) rooftop HVAC units with funding from NOPEC, and last month we upgraded our Wifi switches throughout the building.

In 2022, over 18,000 older adults came through the doors of our senior center for exercise classes, (we have a YMCA satellite office in the building), meals, social, and educational activities. We even provide transportation to our center, bringing isolated seniors to us.

This proposal and one-time money will allow for improvement planning, including more handicapped accessible bathroom stalls and safety bars. The physical building is over 30 years old and as we serve over 100 older adults on a daily basis, this study will be invaluable.

Our director Erin Lally has connected with Lifespan Design Studio of Loveland, Ohio who are national senior center design experts. Funding will help achieve the goal of this study to develop a masterplan identifying a list of short-term and long-term improvement priorities.

The City of Parma, along with the Parma Commission on Aging, is willing to provide a portion of the funding by matching on-call fees for the local Cleveland architect. Additionally, we will research funding opportunities to continue next phases of the plan so having a plan itself is the foundation of our ability to age in place with our older population.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this worthy investment.

Respectfully,

Mayor Tim DeGeeter
City of Parma

5/10/23

PARMA

Smallwood Center getting new HVAC system

John Benson *Special to Sun News*

Members frequenting the Donna Smallwood Activities Center have grown accustomed to sweating in the summer and freezing in the winter.

That's about to change, with the city adding seven new HVAC rooftop units to the popular Powers Boulevard building.

"It's a great improvement for the senior center and a perfect time of year to get installed because weather is starting to heat up," Parma Service Director Tony Vannello said. "We're glad to provide some improvements to the center for our seniors to be able to use."

The extensive purchase is tied to two years' worth of funds awarded to the city by the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council.

The roughly \$160,000 expenditure began last year when the city spent \$97,775 for the units, which were in storage until this year, when Parma sought additional NOPEC funding to cover the \$58,675 installation cost.

The service director said contractor

T.H. Martin was awarded the project, with installation expected in the next couple of weeks.

"These are obviously energy-efficient projects, so they qualify for the use of NOPEC funds," Vannello said.

"Last year, we had enough NOPEC funds also to purchase and install five rooftop HVAC units at the Parma Law Department and Recreation building at 7335 Ridge Road."

Donna Smallwood Activities Center Director Erin Lally is happy to hear that the venue's HVAC will be replaced.

"Our space has not been renovated since it opened 31 years ago," Lally said.

Echoing the same sentiment are several frequent visitors to the center.

"The dining room is freezing and the craft room overheats, so we're excited to have a space that is more comfortable," said Parma resident Paula Hansinger, 77.

Added Parma resident Jeanne Sutyak, 66, "It gets cold in here and my bones ache because of arthritis."



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

May 17, 2023

Honorable Senator Matt Dolan
Chairman Senate Finance Committee
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor 127
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Senator Matt Dolan:

The YMCA of Greater Cleveland partnered with the Donna Smallwood Activity Center in 2015 to serve the wellness needs of the older adult population in the Parma community. Since then, this relationship has grown to become one of the Cleveland Y's most active locations. In 2022 alone, the site welcomed over 17,000 visitors participating in daily group exercise programs, monthly social programs and trips and wellness seminars and screenings.

The Donna Smallwood Activities Center staff and YMCA team work diligently to provide a safe and welcoming environment, and the Y supports the Parma Commission on Aging's ask for funding to complete a Preliminary Improvement Evaluation Study. An investment in the Parma community through the Parma Commission is one that will provide hope and support to the many people who rely on its services every day.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Jeff Jacko

Executive Director of
North Royalton Family YMCA
440-230-9339
jjacko@clevelandymca.org

Loni Beverly

Active Older Adult Director, Association
YMCA of Greater Cleveland
(216) 263-6298
lbeverly@clevelandymca.org

YMCA OF GREATER CLEVELAND

2200 Prospect Ave, Suite 900, Cleveland, OH 44115
P 216 344 0095 F 216 344 0146 www.ClevelandYMCA.org

May 19, 2023

To the Honorable Senator Matt Dolan,

I am writing in support of the Donna Smallwood Activities Center located in Parma, Ohio. The Center is an integral part of the senior community, providing meals, transportation, social services, and a variety of activities to over 50,000 adults last year.

The Donna Smallwood Activities Center is right next to the Parma-Powers Branch of Cuyahoga County Public Library, and together we have established value-added partner programs for the Parma community. This past year we worked together to bring seniors to the library for programming and library staff have provided outreach services at the Center. We also established a deposit collection of library materials at the Center.

I understand that the facility that houses The Donna Smallwood Activities Center was built in 1992 and has not had a major renovation in the years since. It is important that we continue to invest in the future of our aging population and provide them with facilities that meet the growing needs of our senior community.

Sincerely,

Holly Camino
Branch Manager

Parma-Powers Branch
Cuyahoga County Public Library
6996 Powers Blvd.
Parma, OH 44129

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
STATE OF OHIO
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

I, Frank LaRose, do hereby certify that I am the duly elected, qualified and present acting Secretary of State for the State of Ohio, and as such have custody of the records of Ohio and Foreign business entities; that said records show PARMA COMMISSION ON AGING INC., an Ohio not for profit corporation, Charter No. 628733, having its principal location in Parma, County of Cuyahoga, was incorporated on February 10, 1984 and is currently in GOOD STANDING upon the records of this office.



Witness my hand and the seal of the Secretary of State at Columbus, Ohio this 1st day of June, A.D. 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank LaRose".

Ohio Secretary of State

Validation Number: 202315201178