



# Prevent Blindness

Our Vision Is Vision.

## **Testimony of Amy Pulles** *HB 33 – State Operating Budget* June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

On behalf of the volunteers, staff, and Ohioans served by Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate, I am writing today to urge the Senate Finance Committee to restore a House-passed provision in House Bill 33 that would have increased voluntary contributions to the Save Our Sight Fund.

The Children's Save Our Sight Fund (SOS) was established in 1998 by the General Assembly to support the eye health and safety of children. Since its creation, SOS has provided grants to various organizations to undertake important tasks including vision screener training, eye health safety education in schools, distributing protective eyewear for youth athletes, and maintaining the Ohio Amblyope Registry. SOS Grantee organizations provide these services at no cost to organizations and individuals who benefit from these services. The impact has been significant and beneficial to the hundreds of thousands of kids these organizations have served over the past 24 years.

The SOS fund is a non-GRF program that receives financial support from voluntary contributions that are given at the time Ohioans register or renew a motor vehicle registration. You may recall being asked to donate \$1 to the fund when you visited the BMV or [www.Oplates.com](http://www.Oplates.com). This is a simple and effective way to support SOS and we utilize this model of funding for other important public health initiatives including the Second Chance Trust Fund (Driver's Licenses) and the Breast and Cervical Cancer Fund (State Income Tax Returns). By pursuing voluntary contributions in instances when Ohioans are interacting with state government, we can generate revenue while avoiding a mandated fee.

During consideration of House Bill 33 (State Operating Budget), the Ohio House of Representatives added an amendment supported by our organizations that expands the SOS fund and increases the appropriation level for this dedicated purpose line item (ALI 440641). Under the House-approved language, state departments,

agencies, and licensure boards would include a prompt asking licensees whether they would like to make a \$1 contribution to the SOS fund. This would be incorporated into online licensure systems in a similar manner to [www.OPlates.com](http://www.OPlates.com), providing another revenue source for the SOS that is voluntary.

This also increased the appropriation level by approximately \$500,000 per fiscal year to allow more capacity for the Ohio Department of Health to distribute grants once this new contribution begins to generate revenue. We want to stress that this is a non-GRF fund (4V60) and proceeds are utilized to support children's eye health and safety exclusively. For reference, this item can be found in the LSC Comparison Document as DOHCD37 and statutory changes are included in R.C. 4745.05 of HB 33. Annually, the SOS fund provides approximately \$2.4 million in grants to our organizations, and we project this new voluntary contribution would generate between \$500,000 and \$700,000 in additional revenue per fiscal year. Current law allows the Ohio Department of Health to set aside funds for administrative and implementation costs. The SOS fund has proven to have a significant impact on child vision health and safety through a voluntary contribution structure.

In closing, it is my hope that the Senate will restore these provisions in HB 33. PBO and other organizations are committed to maximizing the impact of the SOS fund and promoting eye health and safety for all Ohio kids. Thank you for your consideration and service.