



OHIO JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION

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Ohio Senate Health Committee

Interested Party Testimony on Sub HB 33

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Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss a few matters related to county departments of job and family services that we encourage you to consider in the Senate budget process.

County department of job and family service (CDJFS) agencies administer one of the largest health, human service, and workforce systems in the nation, with one in four Ohioans receiving assistance from the local office at any point in time. The CDJFS is responsible for administering programs to the state's most economically vulnerable citizens. Systems operated through the local agencies include cash assistance, food assistance, childcare, Medicaid (including long-term care, children's health insurance and services to aged, blind and disabled), adoption, adult protective services, child protective services, foster care, refugee services, local workforce initiatives and child support programs. It is the county's primary duty to ensure clients receive the services they need and are entitled to, as well as ensure program integrity.

I would like to draw your attention to several topics that are integral to the efficient and effective administration of Ohio's JFS system:

Clarification Amendments

- We are requesting the Senate adopt a no-cost amendment that would make the budget more transparent; specifically, it would clearly denote the amount of funding to be allocated to the counties and would consolidate all the county funding in the proposed budget in this line item from two different line items as it stands today. No additional appropriations would be necessary.
- We also request Senate support of clarifying language in the current version of the budget in Section 333.200 that we worked out with the Ohio Department of Medicaid and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services as it relates to the funding that county departments receive to conduct Medicaid eligibility and redeterminations.

Program Integrity, Employment & Training

As we have spoken with many of you throughout the budget process thus far, it was clear there are two main areas of focus in our system that the legislature seems to have interest in: maintaining program integrity and strengthening current employment and training programs for individuals on SNAP. As a result, two amendment recommendations emerged to address these priorities, **both of which could draw down a dollar-for-dollar federal match.**

1. **SNAP Employment and Training:** This is an existing program mandated by the federal government. The program is designed to help unemployed and underemployed SNAP recipients address barriers to finding and keeping employment that will enable them to become self-sufficient. We recommend

a \$10M per year GRF increase of dedicated funding in the family assistance – local (600-521) line item. This funding will draw down an additional dollar-for-dollar match making for a total investment of \$20M per year focused on workforce development for SNAP recipients.

2. **Fraud Prevention:** This investment would bolster the brand-new allocation made in the last budget for fraud prevention, detection, and investigation so that every county has at least one full-time equivalent worker focused on program integrity. Currently, counties receive \$2.5M per SFY statewide toward fraud detection and investigation in the family assistance – local (600-521) line item. This funding is distributed via a population-based formula. We recommend building on the success of this funding so that each county can receive an allocation significant enough to fund one full-time equivalent fraud worker in addition to their current allocation. With a 1 to 1 federal match, this would be a modest new GRF investment of \$3.52M per SFY, bringing the total allocation to \$6.02M per SFY. This investment would yield dividends in ensuring program integrity, which protects the safety net for those who truly are eligible.

Serving Children and Older Adults

We are very appreciative of Governor DeWine and the House of Representatives ongoing commitment to serving children and older adults – a commitment which is evident in the review of both the as-introduced and House passed version of the budget. Proposed investments we see as necessary and vital include:

- A proposed \$4M per year increase to the adult protective services line item. This line item funds the counties in responding to reports of alleged elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Counties ensure these allegations are promptly investigated and work to connect victims to protective services. Counties coordinate these efforts with courts, prosecutors, financial institutions, the aging network, hospitals, and other members of the community involved in serving this population.
- A proposed increase in eligibility for the publicly funded child care program of up to 160% of the federal poverty level. Publicly funded child care is a critical work support for the families we serve, and quality child care is a vital component in ensuring children are ready for school.
- A proposed increase of \$25M in SFY24 and \$35M in SFY25 for the state child protection allocation; as well as other investments for best practices, family and children first councils, and other vital programs serving families and children. We encourage the Senate to reevaluate some of the other cuts to proposed programming serving children and youth in the proposed 830506 line item in the Department of Children and Youth.
- A proposed increase in eligibility for pregnant women and children up to 300% of the federal poverty level.

We also support proposed amendments to restore the TANF-funded kinship caregiver program as well as prioritize addressing the placement crisis impacting children services agencies across the state.

Other ODJFS-Funded Workforce Initiatives

We encourage the Senate to consider restoring the cuts made to the 600450 ODJFS Program Operations line item. The state having the funds necessary to provide a stable infrastructure is critical to efficient and

effective services being delivered at the county level. In addition, several promising pilot initiatives are currently housed within this line item, such as the Career Navigator Pilot Program, Child Support Collections Pilot Program, and Benefit Bridge Pilot Program.

We look forward to continuing to partner with the DeWine Administration and the legislature to better serve children, including the development of the newly proposed Department of Children and Youth. Having various programs that serve the same families under the same leadership will help coordinate these efforts and investments in a way not currently possible today.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee. I am happy to answer any questions you have.