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House Children and Human Services Committee
Interested Party Testimony
Amy Roehrenbeck, Esq.
Ohio Child Support Professionals Association
February 27, 2025

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB96 on behalf of the Ohio Child Support Professionals Association (OCSPA). We are a membership organization of county child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs) dedicated to strengthening Ohio's child support program through education, advocacy, and support for county CSEAs.

The child support program encourages responsible parenting, family self-sufficiency, and child well-being by providing services to locate parents, establish paternity, establish child support and medical support orders, collect support, modify orders when circumstances have changed, and enforce orders that are not being paid.

Ohio's Child Support Program serves one in four children in our state with services delivered at the county level, to better meet the needs of local families. Our program works closely with the judicial system. County administration provides direct access to the court system to address necessary issues for nearly 648,000 children. Unlike means-tested programs, our services are available to families across the socio-economic spectrum.

We appreciate the Governor maintained our allocation in this "return to normal" budget, but challenges remain in funding our program at the county level. Flat funding does not mean status quo for county agencies. OCSPA asked for a \$10m investment into the county allocation line item for CSEAs (600502), as our funding has been stagnant for over a decade and the gap is widening in our buying power as wages, insurance cost, supplies, and other expenses continue to rise (see Figure 1 below).

CSEAs have the benefit of a federal financial participation (FFP) match at 66%, but we need the local dollar to access the additional two dollars available via the match to maximize the impact. The county allocation is a critical funding source for our program as we do not have the same number of funding streams available to our sister programs to make up our 34% local share. From a recent

survey of our members, we found that counties are in the position of having to cobble together local funds to keep their child support program afloat at a rate that almost equals what they receive in state match. (See Figure 2 below). County leaders further report that these funding sources are shrinking due to competing programmatic interests and may not be available as we head into this budget. Flat funding across other human services programs exacerbates this problem.

CSEAs work with sister programs across the human services field, including public assistance, children services, workforce, and fatherhood. We assist with family formation through paternity establishment, help link parents with resources and connect parents that need employment and training to Ohio Means Jobs. We work with courts, the private bar, and community partners.

Ohio's child support program is evaluated based on key performance measures, including the collection of current support. In FFY24 we collected \$1.53B in support for Ohio's children, with 70% of these payments coming from employer income withholding. Of the total dollars collected, \$45M was retained to support the TANF maintenance of effort for cash public assistance.

Ohio consistently ranks among the top performing states in overall child support program outcomes, showing again and again the success of our county agencies in administering our program. We are also cost effective, collecting \$4.58 of child support for every \$1.00 spent on our program. Child Support Agencies generate federal funding for counties through contracts with magistrates, clerk's offices, sheriffs, and other partners involved in child support services. In FFY 24 these partnerships resulted in over \$38M being paid to provide services to benefit families.

However, our continued success is uncertain. Like many of our sister programs, we face challenges with workforce, staffing, and increasingly complex cases involving caretakers and low-income families. We have enjoyed years of stability thanks to a tenured workforce, but we are seeing retirements and separations rise, while struggling to fill open positions and stay competitive in the local job markets.

We are seeking an amendment for some small policy changes to provide consistency, expand services, and improve efficiency, and we would appreciate your support.

We respectfully ask for your continued support of the child support program and urge your consideration not only to maintain but to invest and strengthen our state match allocation line item. This investment is vital as our program leverages these funds to secure essential federal dollars. Every additional dollar we receive can help us to match two federal dollars to increase the impact of this investment for the county child support agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.

Figure 1. Child Support Match Allocation Adjusted by Consumer Price Index, SFY 2014-2024

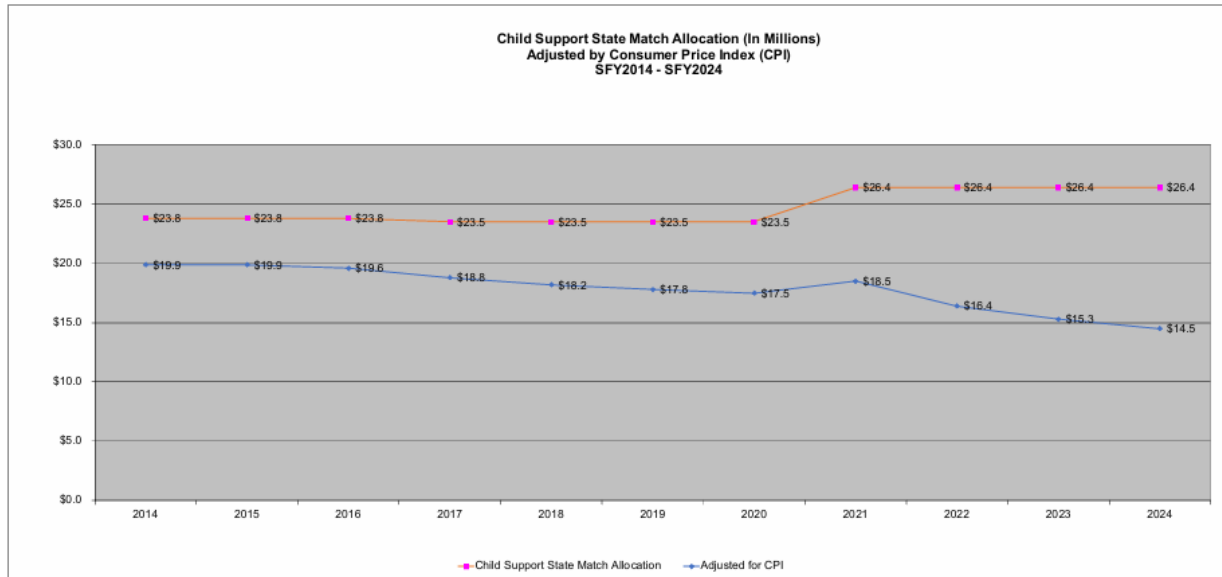


Figure 2: Child Support State Match vs. Other Funding
 (“Other funding” includes county/local GRF, IM Control, 533 dollars, CCMEP RMS, and Levy)

