



## **Advocates for Ohio's Future**

Testimony to the Ohio House of Representatives  
Children and Human Services Committee  
HB 96, Main Operating Budget FY2026-FY2027  
March 5, 2025

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the as-introduced state budget. My name is Sarah Hudacek and I am the Coalition Manager of Advocates for Ohio's Future. Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of state and local health and human services policy, advocacy and provider organizations that strive to strengthen families and communities through health, human services, and early care & education.

AOF is supportive of multiple provisions in the as-introduced budget, including the much-needed investments in work supports for families with kids, such as the proposed refundable Child Tax Credit, which would provide eligible working families up to \$1,000 per child, and the combined expansion of Publicly Funded Child Care initial eligibility to 160 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and the continuation of the Child Care Choice Voucher program to serve families up to 200 percent FPL.

AOF was founded 15 years ago with the recognition that Ohioans don't live their lives in siloes and that unaddressed needs will follow a person throughout their life span. A person facing food insecurity, for example, might also be facing housing insecurity. Needs are often not isolated to one area of life. Our public policy and funding choices should reflect the interconnectedness of health and human services and invest in systems that can truly wrap around Ohioans in communities across the state.

To further that vision, AOF supports the asks of our member organizations to increase investments in Adult Protect Services, the State Child Protection allocation for county Children Services Agencies, the local Child Support Enforcement Agency line, County Departments of Job and Family Services operations, county Family and Children First Councils operations, the Senior Community Services program, and in food supports, including the Ohio Association of Foodbanks and Children's Hunger Network.

Consistently in coalition meetings, AOF members report facing increasing levels of need in the community, often outpacing levels of need seen during the height of the pandemic. For areas where levels of need have remained steady or even decreased from 2020 levels, costs have surged. Flat funding is not sufficient to maintain the status quo and would mean an effective cut to service levels over the next two years.

Being able to reach and serve Ohioans quicker and more efficiently across the aforementioned programs and systems is a sound investment for the state, both in the overall health and well-being of Ohioans, and the

return on investment from the decreased cost of future, more complex needs. AOF asks this committee for your support of these additional provisions.

Thank you to the committee for your diligence throughout this budget process and for investing in health and human services in Ohio. I welcome questions in-person and via email at [shudacek@communitysolutions.com](mailto:shudacek@communitysolutions.com).