



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging

250 East Broad Street, Suite 220
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 481-3511
www.ohioaging.org

WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Kelsey Bergfeld, Chief Policy Officer bergfeld@ohioaging.org
Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
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Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeny, and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Kelsey Bergfeld, Chief Policy Officer for the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) make it possible for older adults to thrive in their homes and communities by providing options that allow older adults to choose the home and community-based services, programming, and living arrangements that suit them best. To support the growing needs of older adults across the state, we ask you consider the following amendments to Sub-HB96.

Healthy Aging -> Senior Community Services Program: The Senior Community Services Program provides flexible, community-driven funding to Area Agencies on Aging for non-Medicaid services like home modifications and repairs, transportation, meals, housing assistance, personal care, and other types of supports that prevent social isolation. Lower cost and less intensive interventions funded through Senior Community Services:

- Delay and divert from enrollment in Medicaid and in more costly nursing home care
- Reduce waiting lists for services
- Enhance health and wellness programming
- Support family caregivers

Senior Community Service dollars fund the same services and programs Healthy Aging grants supported in the last state budget. The Department of Aging did an economic impact study on the Healthy Aging grants and found **for each \$1 invested in healthy aging interventions, the state and local communities received \$3.20 in return**. These services and programs allow older adults to remain safe and healthy in their homes and connected to their communities for as long as possible.

To continue upon the profound outcomes of the Healthy Aging grants and meet the growing need, **we request that the General Assembly invest in older adults and local communities by increasing the Senior Community Services Program by \$2 million per fiscal year.**

Personal Needs Allowance: The Department of Aging's proposed increase in the nursing facility and Assisted Living personal needs allowance (PNA) will help individuals pay for personal and ancillary

expenses not covered by Medicaid like toiletries, haircuts, and clothing; and social and recreational activities. **We ask you to restore the proposed increase in the PNA from \$75 to \$100 per month.**

Housing: Improving Ohio's affordable housing network and options for maintaining existing homes can provide more older adults with safe, secure housing and reduce homelessness. **We ask you to restore the Governor's proposed investments in housing development in rural and border counties.**

Ohio Housing Trust Fund (OHTF): Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging provide services and resources for individuals to remain in their homes and communities as they age. Finding affordable and accessible housing options continues to be one of the biggest challenges to accomplishing this, particularly for low-income older adults. The Ohio Housing Trust Fund is an important and unique partner and resource in supporting affordable, safe and accessible housing options for Ohioans of all ages and abilities. In recent years, Ohio's AAAs have received over \$5 million from the Ohio Housing Trust Fund to address the housing needs of older adults. **We ask that you restore the requirement that housing trust fund fees collected by the county recorder be deposited into the Ohio Housing Trust Fund.**

Our association looks forward to continued conversations about these priorities. With your support, we can all work together to make Ohio the best state in the nation in which to age.