



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony – HB 96**

June 6, 2025

Laura Abu-Absi

Chair Cirino, Vice-Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H.B. 96. I'd like to speak with you about the Adult Protective Services program that is part of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' budget. My name is Laura Abu-Absi, and I'm a member of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services Board of Directors. I'm also on staff with the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association, representing Ohio's county JFS departments.

OCAPS is comprised of both private and public sector individuals focused on better protecting older adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We are unified in recommending a much-needed increase to the state's adult protective services funding. We respectfully request the Senate restore the proposed funding increase of \$2M per SFY to the statewide APS line item – ALI 600534 in the ODJFS budget. While this amount is relatively small in the context of the state budget, it will make a meaningful difference in the ability of county APS programs to respond to the complex and time sensitive situations that are increasingly threatening older adults across the state.

We respectfully request the Senate restore the proposed \$2M/SFY increase to the APS line item in the ODJFS budget (ALI 600534.) The increase will bring the total line item to \$11.72 million per year, statewide, for screenings, investigations, and protective services. This will enable counties to increase the number of services to stabilize older adults who are victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The most recent statewide data indicates increasing rates of abuse, neglect and exploitation with over 38,000 reports including:

- 14% increase in neglect
- 18% increase in abuse
- 34% increase in financial exploitation – closing in on neglect as the number one reason requiring investigation

Older adults are frequently targeted by scammers due to a trusting nature, financial stability and lack of knowledge about current scams. Common methods of elder financial exploitation include scams, identity theft, theft coercion and fraud. Investigating exploitation can be complicated and time-consuming. It involves coordinating collaboration between the state, adult protective services, financial institutions, and local law enforcement to protect victims of financial exploitation. The partnership between APS and law enforcement working together can ensure that cases of elder abuse or financial exploitation are handled with sensitivity and thoroughness, offering both protection and justice for the victims. By combining APS's expertise in elder well-being with law enforcement's investigative and legal capabilities, cases of abuse or exploitation can be resolved more quickly and justly.

Currently, there is no other dedicated source of funding for adult protective services in Ohio other than this state line item in the job and family services budget. Since the scope of county APS programs was

increased just a few years ago to include scams perpetrated by a stranger (often, professional criminals) it is critical to ensure the momentum in expanding the system's capacity to respond continues.

One in ten financial exploitation victims will turn to Medicaid for their basic needs as a direct result of their own monies being stolen from them. Victims of elder abuse and neglect are four times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home and three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital. With quick and thorough intervention, county APS programs are more likely to be able to find safe, less restrictive, and less costly services to stabilize victims.

Protection of older adults takes collaboration with courts, law enforcement and service providers. We ask for increased state support to APS programs so that where an older adult lives does not determine their ability to be protected.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm happy to answer questions you may have.



Board Members:

Laura Abu-Absi - Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association
Kristina Allwood – Ohio Human Services Training System – Institute for Human Services
Kelsey Bergfeld – Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Blaine Brockman – Darby Legal
Maridell Couture – Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services
Sue Daugherty – Serving Our Seniors, Inc.
Meredith Davis – Center for Holocaust Survivors
Carol Dayton – APS Consultant and National Adult Protective Services Association Board
Chandel Dusenbury – Lorain County Department of Job and Family Services, APS
Deanna Green – Washington County Department of Job and Family Services, APS
Melanie Hankinson – IKOR of Columbus
Chris Jones – Lucas County Department of Job and Family Services, APS
Kevin Kurpieski – Butler County Department of Job and Family Services APS
Richard Meeker – Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging
Cindy Paige - Oasis Senior Advisors
Natasha Pietrocola - Cuyahoga County Division of Job and Family Services, APS
Sylvia Pla-Raith – Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services, APS
Caroline Rankin – Franklin County Office on Aging
Teri Ruslander – Grove City Division of Police
Susan Stroup – Coleman Professional Services
Sue Thomas Sikora – Guernsey County DJFS
Heidi Turner-Stone – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Stephanie Warner – Ohio Department of Aging
April Wehrle – Office of the Ohio Attorney General