

## **Gail Cox Senate Health Committee Testimony from Gail Cox, For Adult Protective Services Funding**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Gail Cox. I am a senior citizen and a member of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). I am speaking today on behalf of the need to greatly increase funding for Adult Protective Services.

As you are aware Adult Protective Services protects vulnerable adults, particularly the elderly from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation living in the communities of Ohio. It is overseen by the Department of Job and Family Services and is administered at the county level in each of Ohio's 88 counties.

In the last yearly report of elder abuse in Ohio, there were over 30,000 cases reported. However, this represents only a fraction of those cases of elder abuse, with research indicating that the number of those elderly abused is 170,000 or more yearly. This can include neglect by those who are responsible for caring for those who cannot take care of themselves. It can include abuse, physical or otherwise, by family members or others. It can include exploitation by caretakers taking our money or medications. As an example, I knew an elderly woman with disabilities whose children took all of her money and then left her at the women's shelter. To the best of my knowledge, this was never reported to Adult Protective Services. As a senior citizen myself, I am fortunate to be healthy and vigorous, but as we get older, we become more vulnerable.

Although the provision of Adult Protective Services is a mandated service in Ohio's counties, Ohio is not providing enough funds in its budget to ensure the safety of our seniors and other vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect.

This is not acceptable. There needs to be an increase in funding to this critical service. NOBLE is requesting that the amount funded be at \$22.75 million per year for adult protective services in this year's biennium budget. This will establish a match that draws down the maximum amount of federal dollars from the Older Americans Act local for area offices of aging.

As the number of elderly, particularly frail elderly, continues to increase in Ohio, it is vital that we give the counties the resources that are necessary to protect those who are being abused, neglected and exploited.

Thank you for your consideration.