



May 13, 2025

**Ohio Senate Health Committee  
Interested Party Testimony on Sub. HB 96**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Senate Health committee, thank you for your time today to share our perspective on the state budget, substitute HB 96. My name is Tara Britton and I'm the Director of Public Policy at The Center for Community Solutions, an independent, nonpartisan policy and research center dedicated to delivering practical, data-driven solutions focused on improving health, social and economic conditions for Ohioans.

The House made significant changes to the Governor's version of the budget and overall, we recommend moving back toward the as-introduced version of the budget. This testimony is framed around our budget priorities.

**Improve coordination, efficiency, and access across public benefits, including Medicaid, SNAP, TANF and WIC.**

Included in our work to improve coordination, efficiency and access, we have closely examined the TANF budget since the mid-1990s. We have worked closely with JFS over the years to ensure we are comparing apples to apples across budget cycles, and that is something that is typically a moving target throughout the budget process as each chamber changes TANF allocations. We are also working to better understand what is contributing to the TANF sustainability fund, or underspend, and how to ensure this figure is budgeted more accurately, rather than the moving target it has been over the last several budget cycles. Ultimately, what all these questions tell us is that the nature of a block grant, like TANF, means we have a limited amount of dollars for an expanding and increasing set of needs. Block grants' value erodes over time and the design limits the ability of states to respond to needs. TANF is aimed at reducing poverty, but shouldn't be the only resource committed to this effort.

**Advocate for solutions to health and human services issues that address the needs of Ohioans of every age.**

We are supportive of the House's increased funding for adult protective services and other programs that help to keep older adults safe and healthy in their homes and communities. Community Solutions has supported increased funding for APS for many state budgets and are glad to see continued movement in the right direction.

**Improve data collection and sharing and implement strategies to improve maternal health, with a focus on those most impacted by severe outcomes and death.**

The as-introduced budget included an expansion of home visiting programs for new moms and their families, but the House passed version reduced support for home visiting. Given Ohio's still too high rates of maternal and infant mortality, this is a move in the wrong direction. The House-passed

version of the budget also reduced funding in the infant vitality line that would have specifically supported community and local faith-based service providers.

Ohio joined the national Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health or AIM in 2020 which engages states in a process to implement clinical patient safety bundles that are designed around leading causes of maternal mortality and morbidity. We are making progress, but we have not adopted all of the available patient safety bundles that exist. This includes the patient safety bundles designed around care for pregnant and postpartum people with substance use disorders nor have we adopted the bundle around perinatal mental health, both of which are linked to the leading cause of maternal deaths in Ohio, according to 2017-2018 data included in the most recent report released in 2022. We would encourage Ohio to move toward further adopting patient safety bundles that have been shown to improve maternal health outcomes.

**Support the continuum of care for children and youth with behavioral health needs.**

Both the Governor's and House's versions of the budget includes continued support for the [OhioRISE program](#) and school-based health centers that can reach students in school who have behavioral health needs. We are supportive of these efforts that will continue to improve services and availability for youth in need across the state.

**Ensure Summer EBT (SunBucks) has adequate funding and infrastructure.**

The budget includes funding for the state's portion of administering the Summer EBT program, now known as SunBucks. Community Solutions recently issued a report documenting the experiences of families and school districts with the [first year of Summer EBT \(2024\)](#). Summer EBT provided critical nutrition assistance to 1.2 million Ohio children in 2024, exceeding expectations. Families appreciated the timing of the benefits, ease of enrollment, and the dignity the program provides. The school administrators interviewed found Summer EBT to operate more smoothly than the program's predecessor (Pandemic EBT) and was not overly burdensome for schools to participate. We are pleased to see continued support for this program in the budget proposal and stand ready to help in any way we can to expand awareness of the program.

**Advocate for additional funding for harm reduction.**

The House's version of the budget reduced the dedicated funding, compared to the Governor's budget proposal; to support local health providers' harm reduction efforts and we would ask for restoration of this funding. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services does include an array of harm reduction related programming and a new level of flexibility in the state's funding for local alcohol, drug addiction and mental health services (ADAMHS) boards, which can be used for local [harm reduction](#) needs.

**Lead poisoning prevention**

The House made significant changes that would be detrimental for children across Ohio as it relates to reducing exposure to lead poisoning. The House substantially reduced the lead abatement funding. This reduction impacts the ability for local governments to improve housing quality for Ohioans. And the House completely eliminated funding for the lead-safe home fund, hollowing out lead prevention and remediation efforts supported by state dollars. Children across the state could risk continuous exposure in their homes without proper mitigation. Community Solutions supports the work of the Lead-Free Kids Coalition and the Coalition's asks to restore this funding to the Governor's introduced budget.

Community Solutions' mission is to improve health, social and economic conditions, which span several issues and thus, several state agencies, so we appreciate the committee's attention today to an array of health and human services priorities. There are major changes to both housing and food access which we are working in partnership to help address. We support the work to restore the Ohio Housing Trust Fund and increase funding to our foodbanks. I, and others on our knowledgeable team at Community Solutions, would be happy to answer any questions, today or in follow-up conversations, via [tbritton@communitysolutions.com](mailto:tbritton@communitysolutions.com). Thank you!