



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

Testimony to the Ohio Senate - Interested Party  
Health Committee  
HB 96, Main Operating Budget FY2026-FY2027  
May 14, 2025

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96. 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 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. 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.

With that in mind, I'd like to address a few budget provisions that would impact the health of Ohioans throughout their lives:

### **Protecting Children's Futures - Lead Poisoning Prevention**

Ohio children face a heightened risk of lead poisoning at an early age. More than 2/3 of Ohio's housing was built before 1980, making them more likely to have lead hazards, and children live in more than 427,000 of these homes. Exposure to lead paint dust in old homes is the number one source of lead poisoning, and Ohio has the second highest rate of children testing positive for elevated blood lead levels in the country.<sup>1</sup>

In the House-passed budget, the Department of Health's lead abatement and lead-safe home fund programs were cut by 96% compared to current funding levels. There is no cure for lead poisoning and the health effects of lead poisoning are irreversible and can fundamentally impact a child's development, learning, and behavior throughout their lives.

Children are our future. AOF joins the Ohio Lead-Free Kids Coalition in asking that the Lead Safe Home Fund (DOH 440530) and Lead Abatement (DOH 440527) lines be restored to the Governor's as-introduced levels.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://case.edu/schubertcenter/sites/default/files/2020-06/Ohio%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Lead-Free%20Children.pdf>

## **Supporting Families and Children - Child Care**

For low-income families, child care is one of the largest, most burdensome expenses. The cost of child care has risen substantially in recent years, and child care now costs an average of \$9,500 per year for preschool-aged children, \$11,000 per year for toddler care, and \$12,300 for infant care. Lack of access to affordable child care close to work and home is one of the biggest barriers to work that Ohio families face.

AOF asks for restoration of the as-introduced increase to Publicly Funded Child Care initial eligibility to 160 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) as well as the restoration of the as-introduced investments in the Child Care Choice Voucher program to serve families up to 200 percent FPL.

## **Support the Efficiency of SNAP**

As we continue to see the cost of living and cost of groceries increase, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical program to ensure that Ohio families are able to work, go to school, and be engaged in their communities, all while being fueled by food purchased from grocery stores in their communities with fully federally funded benefits.

Reporting changes included in the House-passed budget would increase the administrative burden of the SNAP program on county Job and Family Services case workers and on SNAP participants (RC 5101.546, JFSCD36). These new provisions would require SNAP participants to report their income each month, instead of the current 6-month recertifications and the already existing requirements for participants to report any change that would impact their eligibility for the program.

In practice, this would mean Ohioans would see a fluctuation in their benefit levels from one month to the next if they pick up an extra shift or two or work overtime, even if the income changes don't impact their eligibility.

This would exacerbate the SNAP benefits cliff and reverse recent strides Ohio has taken to turn the cliff into an off-ramp. AOF asks that these cumbersome reporting requirements be removed.

## **Supporting Healthy Aging - Senior Community Services**

The Senior Community Services program provides flexible funding to Area Agencies on Aging for non-Medicaid services, including home modifications and repairs, transportation, meals, housing assistance, and personal care. These supports prevent social isolation and delay and divert from enrollment in Medicaid and entrance into nursing facilities.

For every \$1 invested in these healthy aging interventions, the state and local communities see a \$3.20 return on investment. AOF supports the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging and the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition<sup>2</sup> in asking for additional investment in these healthy aging supports with an increase of \$1 million in Senior Community Services (AGE 490411) per fiscal year.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hannah.com/ShowDocument.aspx?ItemID=139275>

## **Adult Protective Services**

The Adult Protective Services system helps to keep older adults safe and healthy in their homes and communities by protecting and advocating on behalf of older Ohioans who are survivors of or at risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

AOF thanks the House for the much-needed investment of an additional \$2 million per fiscal year in Adult Protective Services (JFS 600534) to support prevention and response to elder abuse and neglect and we join the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services in asking that this investment be maintained in the Senate.

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

**Advocates for Ohio's Future**  
175 S. Third Street Suite 350 | Columbus Ohio 43215  
[www.advocatesforohio.org](http://www.advocatesforohio.org) | [shudacek@communitysolutions.com](mailto:shudacek@communitysolutions.com)