

Advocates for Ohio's Future

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TESTIMONY

ADVOCATES FOR OHIO'S FUTURE

HB 64

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

GAIL CLENDENIN

INTERIM STATE DIRECTOR

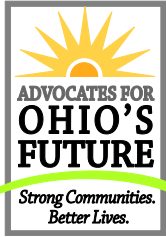
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Support for HHS Proposals in H.B. 64

Advocates for Ohio's Future is a statewide coalition of over 475 organization that advocate for health and human services budget and policy solutions so all Ohioans live better lives.

We want to share some perspectives on how our state is doing and where targeted investments are needed to ensure that Ohio is a great place for all Ohioans to live and work.

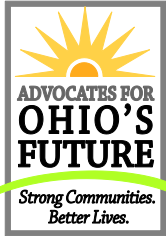
We agree with Governor Kasich and state lawmakers - jobs are fundamental for a strong economy, stable families, and individual well-being. We believe that our communities thrive when people are safe, have good jobs and can afford the basics. When families can pay for the basics—like housing, child care, food, and repairs—that spending strengthens the economy and supports local business. When people can't afford the basics, the economy slows down. A slow economy harms the local community, including businesses and Ohioans at all income levels who call it home.

Bold policy reform and investments are needed so Ohioans can climb the ladder up and out of poverty. We need targeted investments in our greatest asset – our people.

Before people are able to lift themselves up out of poverty through the use of training and education, they must be able to meet their basic needs. If they or their children are hungry, if they have no means of transportation, if they have untreated health issues, if they have an active opioid addiction, if they do not feel safe in their homes – those have to be addressed so that people can leverage training and education to better their life situation. Targeted, smart investments in human services—including food assistance, health care, early education, behavioral health, long-term services and supports, housing and child welfare—promote and support a productive workforce.

Sadly, the harsh reality for too many workers is that a job does not always mean a living. While Ohio is in the midst of an economic recovery, over the last ten years the median family income in Ohio has declined 13%. In 2003, median family income was \$53,800. In 2013, it was \$46,875. While Ohio's families are bringing in less money, the costs to support a family – food, housing, child care, health care, education, utilities, and transportation - have gone up. Further, while overall unemployment has fallen in the past few years, there is an economic trend toward more low-wage, part-time and temporary jobs.

Human services play a key role in stabilizing individuals and families, so they can compete and thrive in the 21st century economy. In order to make sure all Ohioans can participate in the economic recovery, Ohio needs to do more to make sure low-wage families and communities are stable and have the appropriate education and skills to be competitive in our new economy. We have an opportunity to prepare Ohioans to acquire and maintain quality jobs, so in the long run, they can support themselves and their families. It will take bold public investments and policy changes to strengthen Ohio's workforce and make all Ohioans competitive.



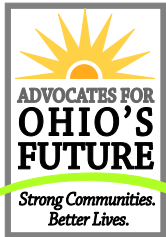
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Advocates for Ohio's Future, supports the following five requests from our coalition partners. We recognize that these health and human services issues are important components of ensuring that all Ohioans are safe, have good jobs, and can afford the basics.

- (1) **We support the request for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund Amendment that will provide funding for housing programs in years when revenue declines** – COHHIO's proposed statutory change to H.B. 64 would help stabilize OHTF funding volatility by creating a Housing Trust Reserve Fund. Here's how it works: If the amount of Housing Trust Fund fees received during a year exceeds \$50 million, any additional fees up to \$15 million will be deposited into the Housing Trust Reserve Fund. Once the Reserve Fund reaches \$15 million, any additional Housing Trust Fund fees will return to the state General Revenue Fund. The Reserve Fund can be used in years when the Housing Trust Fund revenues fall short of \$50 million, allowing critically important housing projects and programs to continue even in years when revenues decline.
- (2) **We support the request for additional funding for the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program (OFPACP) that provides healthy food for millions of Ohioans** – Advocates for Ohio's Future supports the Ohio Association of Foodbanks request for \$20 million per year over the 2016-17 biennial budget in support of OFPACP. OFPACP directs surplus and unmarketable agricultural products from nearly 100 Ohio farmers, growers, and commodity producers to Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks, which provide food to about 3,300 hunger relief organizations including food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters. This request reflects an increase of \$5.5 million per year and a mere 83¢ per person, per month served by Ohio's hunger relief network. Over 1 in 6 Ohioans now rely on the emergency food assistance network. In 2014, over 2,007,500 Ohioans turned to the OFPACP network to feed themselves and their families. Demand for emergency food assistance is up 40 percent across the state since 2010 and OFPACP is a proven public-private partnership that can respond efficiently and cost-effectively to that increased demand for services.
- (3) **We support the request to maintain current Medicaid eligibility without barriers** – Ohio's Medicaid program is a key work support. A healthy workforce is a productive workforce. AOF fully supports the continuation of extended health care coverage through the Ohio Medicaid Program. Further, AOF advocates for continuing Medicaid coverage that maintains, without barriers, an affordable, obtainable, comprehensive benefit package for low income Ohioans.

We also support UHCAN Ohio and the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers' request for the continuation of coverage for women who are pregnant or who need screening and treatment for breast and cervical cancer and the family planning program, for people with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. Uninsured Ohioans who need these services have no access to private insurance or subsidized private coverage through the federal Marketplace, except during the brief annual Open Enrollment Period. Pregnant women and women needing cancer screening and treatment cannot wait for Open Enrollment. They need



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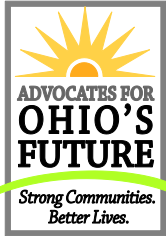
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treatment immediately and often cannot afford to pay for treatment out of pocket. Family planning services allow families to practice “safe spacing” of pregnancies, increasing healthy birth outcomes for mothers and infants and supporting current goals to reduce Ohio’s infant mortality rates.

- (4) **We support the request for temporary language to successfully achieve the proposed modernized and expanded array of behavioral health services** – The SFY 16-17 budget provides a vision that supports further integration of physical and behavioral health. It proposes a modernized and expanded array of behavioral health services; continued investment in recovery supports, including housing, employment, and prevention; and a partnership between OhioMHAS and ODRC to improve behavioral health services in the criminal justice system, all of which offers a path for rebuilding Ohio’s behavioral health system. Advocate for Ohio’s Future supports the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Service Providers’ request for temporary language that provides oversight, accountability, and timelines for implementation of behavioral health system reforms to safeguard behavioral health service access and capacity, rebuild system infrastructure, and workforce.

To achieve integration and improve care coordination, the budget proposes to transition behavioral health services to a managed care model. The proposed MHAS budget allocations continue an approach of targeted investments to fill gaps in service delivery, including approximately \$48.7 million in new or re-purposed funds for treatment and recovery supports. These resources combined with \$58 million in Medicaid covered treatment services available from expansion are a significant investment. While encouraged by the vision, successful implementation is likely to require additional resources to address infrastructure, service capacity, and workforce challenges that have existed for years and may be challenging in a budget neutral environment. Working together in collaboration, there is opportunity to wisely invest resources that re-build behavioral health services and promote health, wellness, and recovery for all Ohioans.

- (5) **We support the request to ensure safe and permanent, lifelong families for Ohio’s children in the child welfare system** – Advocates for Ohio’s Future believes it is important to ensure safe and permanent, lifelong families for Ohio’s abused, neglected and multi-system children. The child welfare system serves as both first responder to reports of child abuse and neglect and as the system of last resort for families who are forced to relinquish custody of their children in order to access treatment and services. Yet, the system is stretched as local communities provide 52% of the total child welfare investment in Ohio and the state’s share is just 9%. There is an opportunity to strengthen the child welfare system in this budget by committing the energy and resources needed now and in the future.



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We support PCSAO's request to:

- Restore funding lost in 2009 in the State Child Protection Allocation (523 line item) by \$15 million per year to the 85 county Public Children Services Agencies to reduce poverty by improving permanency outcomes for abused and neglected children
- Provide \$5 million to hardship counties via the State Child Protection Allocation (523 line item) to achieve some equity for abused, neglected and multi-system children
- Create a study group to examine the issue of multi-system youth (juvenile justice, mental health, and developmental disabilities) including current costs and outcomes, and present a plan with recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2015
- Address the physical and behavioral health needs of children and families, including focusing on trauma and parental addiction, to help more families stay together.

Working together, we can ensure that Ohioans are safe, healthy and productive. We can strengthen our workforce and ensure that every community has jobs that boost the local economy and provide opportunity for all – full time jobs, jobs with benefits, and jobs that offer career advancement. Our state budget priorities make a difference. It's time to reinvest in Ohioans.

As Advocates for Ohio's Future partners with organizations on additional health and human services issues in the coming weeks, we will continue to keep the committee aware of our positions.