



Advocates for Ohio's Future

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Testimony Ohio House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

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Senate Bill 329

Good morning Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Rezabek, Ranking Minority Member Clyde and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee. My name is Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, and I serve as the co-chair of Advocates for Ohio's Future. Advocates for Ohio's Future is a statewide coalition of over 450 local and statewide organization that promotes health and human service budget and policy solutions so that all Ohioans live better lives.

Ohio's budget and public policy priorities can make Ohioans more competitive, create good jobs, increase opportunity for all Ohioans, and make Ohio's economy stronger. Health, human services and early education benefit all Ohioans and are fundamental building blocks of healthy, thriving communities.

The building blocks of health, human services and early education for the millions of Ohioans of low- and moderate-income are provided by the public sector. Senate Bill 329 would focus legislative attention not on the welfare of the people of Ohio that these programs serve, but on the departments through which these building blocks are delivered, not only in biennial budget discussions, but again, once every four years: for justification of their very existence and the manner through which the elected governor carries out their functions.

In some states, sunset reviews have been established to create a legislative infrastructure that Ohio already has. For example, the Ohio Legislative Service Commission produces the "Red Books" before the biennial budget process which review program, personnel, trends, funding and policy; the "Green Books," which show policy and budget changes of the new budget; the analysis of bills, fiscal notes, and more. Ohio already has a legislative infrastructure to review policy, program and funding. The State Auditor reviews agency programs. If there is suspicion of fraud, the Inspector General investigates. The system has many review mechanisms in place.

While there are many forms of sunset reviews in place across the nation, this is the *only* version that would allow an agency to die without a vote of the legislature or input from the executive branch. Only Texas has a sunset review that looks at entire state departments. It reviews them once every 12 years, relies on a 12-member, appointed commission from within and outside of the legislature, has funding for a professional staff of 28 and takes all votes of the committee to the legislature for a final vote. Senate Bill 329 proposes something new, without checks and balances, for Ohio.

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The emphasis of the bill on departments that administer significant state and federal revenues would intensify lobbying and could lead to "Christmas-tree" bills laden with changing rules and regulations which would interfere with stable program delivery. This endangers the programs and services that government provides to protect the health and welfare of the poor, aged, disabled and other Ohioans who live in or close to poverty.

Advocates for Ohio's Future opposes the provisions of S.B. 329 and encourages the committee to embrace the more reasonable provisions of HB 613.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony and I would be pleased to answers any questions, that you may have.