

TESTIMONY
BEFORE
THE OHIO SENATE
FINANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 9, 2015

OHIO COALITION FOR ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Presented by

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Coley and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you for a few minutes concerning Substitute HB 64 and the funding for the Adult Protective Services program. I am Sara Lewellen and I am currently the Vice-Chair of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS), the oldest standing Ohio Coalition in existence. I am also the Supervisor of the Social Services Unit at the Pike County Department of Job & Family Services, which is responsible for the provision of Adult Protective Services to Pike County's residents.

I am here today to testify on behalf of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services. OCAPS is a statewide coalition developed to enhance the provision of service by collaboration, education and advocacy for older adults who are victims or at risk of becoming victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation. OCAPS has been in existence for 40 years and has members all across the State of Ohio, representing agencies and organization of numerous disciplines that are dedicated to the protection of Ohio's aging population.

Elder abuse, neglect and exploitation are costly epidemics in many ways. Fiscal year 2014 saw over 13,600 reports of these crimes come into county APS units across the state. It is conservatively estimated that less than 1 in 8 victims are referred to APS staff. Our elderly victims are 4 times more likely to be admitted into a long term care facility. The direct medical costs associated with violent injuries to older adults are estimated to add over \$5.3 billion to the nation's annual health expenditures. Nationally, almost one in ten financial abuse/exploitation victims will turn to Medicaid as a direct result of their own resources being stolen from them through exploitation. Those losses are estimated to total \$36.5 billion each year. The goal of the Adult Protective Services program is to seek the least restrictive

environment for elderly victims and an effective, well-supportive program can result in significant financial savings for the State and certain provides for healthier and happier families.

I want to thank you for the funding opportunities that have been provided by the State to the counties for planning, expansion and innovation. The opportunity to develop and improve our APS services by using the funding that has been made available was much needed and greatly appreciated. I am also extremely excited about the training opportunities that are now available for workers. Consistent training makes for consistent services, making for higher quality services and lending validity to statistics and data. The training is much needed and very much appreciated. A reporting tool that all counties must use to document their referrals is also important as it provides data that would allow counties to track their activities and provide information and evidence to all interested parties such as the Ohio Senate so they can see the need for APS funding and know that the money allocated is money well-spent

OCAPS has always campaigned to have at least one full-time APS worker in each of the 88 counties. We have requested and pursued the securing of funding to make this happen. We now, thanks to the recent funding allotment, have come closer than we have ever been to meeting that goal. Pike County will receive \$30,000 from the APS line item. This is terrific and we applaud our lawmakers for including APS in the budget. However, even in a county as small as Pike, this still falls short of the funding needed to provide effective services to our senior residents. While \$30,000 may meet a significant portion of the expense of one worker, there is little left over to provide direct services to our clients in need, or we may opt to use the funding to provide services but have no one who can go into homes, make assessments, and determine exactly what the services needed are. We are trapped between having a worker who sees that

services are needed but cannot be provided, and having some funding for services but no staff to provide, facilitate or arrange for those services to be delivered.

On behalf of OCAPS and county APS workers all across Ohio, and definitely on behalf of Ohio's senior population, I respectfully request that you consider increasing the funding level for the Adult Protective Services Program. OCAPS has collectively determined that increasing the line item to \$20 million dollars would go a long way in allowing for each county to have at least one full-time worker and be able to provide some services. I personally acknowledge that any increase in funding would be welcomed and your consideration of APS in the future will be greatly appreciated.

I am happy to entertain any questions at this time or each and all of you are welcome to contact me at any time. My email is Sara.Lewellen@jfs.ohio.gov and my phone numbers are 740-947-2171 ext. 8823 (work) or 740-577-2644 (cell).