

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE OHIO SENATE
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, June 9, 2015

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Presented by

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Executive Director/CEO**

Clermont Senior Services, Inc.
Exclusive Contract Agency with
Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services
For Adult Protective Services

Background and Relevance

Clermont Senior Services, a 501(c)(3) agency, has the exclusive contract with the Clermont County Department of Job and Family Services to conduct the investigations on all referrals made through Adult Protective Services, as well as conducting guardianship investigations under contract with Clermont County Probate Court.

As the administrator and provider of services for all senior levy funds under contract with the Clermont County Commissioners, Clermont Senior Services is the gateway for persons 60 years of age and older in Clermont County. For more than 45 years, this agency has provided a broad range of community-based services (medical transportation, home care, home-delivered meals, adult day services, home repair and modification), thus enabling older adults to continue to live safely in their own homes for as long as possible.

Clermont County was the first county to pass a levy to support services for seniors in the State of Ohio in 1982, and the taxpayers have continued to entrust Clermont Senior Services and support a levy since that time.

The Miami University Scripps Gerontology Center projects that the 60+ population in Clermont County will grow by 120% between 2010 and 2020. By 2020, 30.5% of the total population in Clermont County will be persons age 60 and over.

TESTIMONY

Greetings Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Coley and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Cynthia Gramke, and I am the Executive Director/CEO of Clermont Senior Services, a private, non-profit organization having the exclusive contract with the Clermont County Department of Family Services to conduct the investigations and follow-up for those cases that are referred to Adult Protective Services. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify this afternoon and re-enforce the horror and crime of elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation that resonates through our communities and our state. I may not be able to provide any more powerful points than will be presented, but I can give you a local perspective; a microcosm of the state, that is specific to the widespread and ever-growing number of cases our investigators see every day.

In Clermont County, there were 124 Adult Protective Services referrals of abuse, neglect and/or

financial exploitation referred for investigation in 2008. This number exploded by more than 100%, reaching a high of 268 referrals in 2013 and, then nominally lower having 258 in in 2014. Moreover, these cases of abuse, neglect and what has been evidenced as a dramatic increase in financial exploitation of the elderly, are more complex and the situations worse than ever before.

While there are many mandates that protect the lives of other vulnerable populations, Adult Protective Services is the only mandated service for older adults in the State of Ohio. Moreover, it should be reiterated for purposes of my testimony, the *statewide* annual funding for Adult Protective Services is approximately \$500,000.

In Clermont County, the breakdown of that state allocation for this *less-than-minimally-funded-mandate* is a grand total of \$7,000 annually. With the difference being derived from the General Fund in Clermont County, the contract with DJFS has also remained the same at \$31,707 annually, for many years. The current case load of referrals demands one full-time chief investigator, one part-time investigator and two back-up investigators, protecting the physical and financial wellbeing of the elderly in our community, making the total direct cost for operations of Adult Protective Services in Clermont County \$127,629.59 plus mileage reimbursement of \$4,473.01, totaling \$132,102.60, not including administrative time, which would still exist, but be re-prioritized. \$7,000 is only 5.3% of the cost for this, sadly, growing and *less-than minimally-funded mandated* state program.

I am genuinely grateful that the state is acknowledging the importance for protecting our elderly with proposing an increase to \$3 million. However, on a statewide spread, this will only mean approximately \$30,000 per county.

Clermont County is fortunate to have been the first county to pass a levy to support services for seniors in the State of Ohio, and that community trust continues today, but we are forced to pull levy dollars away from other vital services like transporting our Clermont County veterans to Hamilton County VA Hospital for treatment, our elderly residents to essential medical appointments and to dialysis, meals-on-wheels, home care, adult day services and home repair because the dollars must be carved out to operate Adult Protective Services. Those dollars have drastically declined after real property revaluation that resulted in levy and other revenue dropping by \$786,172 or 10% since 2008. While levy revenue must be used for Adult Protective Services, other critical services, for which the levy specifications were intended, are suffering.

The senior population is exploding in Clermont County. The 60+ population is 41,000 today and is projected to rise to 51,000 by 2020. By the sheer numbers alone, we are assured of an increase in serious financial exploitation and abuse cases. Layer that with the expansion of mandatory reporters and other requirements, as well as in the direct correlation with the rise in opiate addiction in our community, the referrals and need for investigation and follow-up services will continue to grow.

In cases of financial exploitation, we must work to save seniors from falling prey to the unlawful, deceitful, and criminal act of family, friends and strangers draining them of all of a lifetime of savings and frugal living, often thrusting them into bankruptcy and foreclosure. They are left with no choice but to become dependent upon Medicaid and other public assistance programs for the remainder of their lives. Then, the taxpayer ultimately suffers, as well.

At Clermont Senior Services, our ability to investigate, team with in-house case management and link victims to vital services, as well as work in cooperation with the Assistant Prosecuting Attorney's Office and Probate Court to further link that individual with the services/assistance needed, is the strength of the structure of the agency as a multi-service provider organization. For the state, there must be a regard for those who are too old, too weak, too afraid and who cannot protect themselves.

We have a basic societal responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

I carefully weigh and take my conservative fiscal accountability to the taxpayers who support us very seriously. Even the most conservative must understand the crisis and crime of elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you demonstrate your regard for the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable of the elderly in the State of Ohio through an increase in the appropriation for Adult Protective Services to \$20 million, annually, and that this funding be provided to the front line in the counties where this most important work is being performed.