

TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
FINANCE SUB HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE

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By

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Subcommittee,

I am Cindy Farson, Director of the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, serving 8 counties, and also representing the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging. I'd like to testify on Adult Protective Services (APS) funding in the budget bill. In our role as case managers for over 8,800 Central Ohio adults in various community based long term care programs, APS is a critical service, and the workers, some of our most important partners.

The serious attention given to APS in Ohio the past few years has been a tremendous improvement. I serve on the Attorney General's Elder Abuse Commission and served on the APS Funding Workgroup which helped to determine the use of the \$10 Million one-time appropriation in HB 483. The state wide expectations, one time innovation projects and training set up for APS workers through the appropriation were a great step forward in my opinion.

But this work needs to be followed up by an annual appropriation that allows counties, especially rural counties, to meet the new state standards and the growing demand.

The high point of funding for APS was \$2.8 million 16 years ago. It was considered an unfunded mandate then by most counties and later funding plunged

to \$500,000. Reports to APS rose by almost 60% since 1989, but state funding fell by more than 80%. We appreciated the increase to 2.6 Million in the current budget which gave a minimum \$30,000 to each county, where they may have had under \$2000 previously. However, given the increase in need for APS over the years, and the new expectations for the Counties, I believe it is still an unfunded mandate for many counties.

Counties need to be able to count on stable funding to employ at least one APS dedicated worker or the equivalent in small counties and more in larger counties.

There is now a state 800 number for Ohioans that don't know where to turn locally, which is a good idea. That number rolls directly to the local county APS where trained staff need to respond to that call in a timely manner and provide follow-up action. Expectations have increased, as they should, but resources must also be available to make the system work.

I am a believer in Interdisciplinary teams and how effective it can be to get organizations together to solve problems. Services to help people stay at home are often coordinated through these councils. But there must be a knowledgeable APS representative, with the time to thoroughly investigate cases, bring them to the team and sometimes follow the case for effective coordination to happen. In smaller counties, a worker may still be juggling both APS and Children services complaints, and handling home clean ups and other direct services themselves. We

need resources within an APS unit to make the system work. And we need funds for emergency clean ups and emergency temporary housing for the most critical cases in all counties.

Adult abuse and neglect is underreported in America for many reasons. However, I expect we can all understand how the opioid crisis and growing financial fraud has increased the need to make sure there is a place in each county where older adults can be protected and effective investigation can take place.

A recent example I heard from one of our I-teams was an 85 year old gentleman who had two sons. He began receiving homecare services. His grandson stole his rent money and our case manager worked with the client to report the theft to the police and made a referral to APS. Another son who also took money from him moved the gentleman into an unfurnished apartment saying furniture would be delivered the next day. Our case manager and APS both visited and still no furniture after a few days of the client sleeping in his wheelchair. (home health and meals were still being delivered) Then our case manager started working with the physician and a nursing home for placement. This case was presented to the I-team and it was decided that at 3:30 that day, when the grandson went to work, we would arrange transportation to the nursing home until alternative plans could be made. An APS worker went to the apartment to be there for the transport to the nursing home. We were concerned that the grandson would remove the gentleman

from the nursing home (for his check) so APS filed a protective order to prohibit the removal. Our case managers can do a lot for folks but APS is the one with legal authority to order an investigation or file for a protective order and that is sometimes necessary.

We join the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services in asking for \$10 million a year for the APS line item (ALI 600-534) in this budget. A base allocation of at least \$65,000 per county per year, with additional dollars allocated by formula, would ensure that county agencies can hire at least one full time staff person. It would also provide additional resources needed for outreach, education and services. Area Agencies on Aging have a goal of keeping people safe at home for as long as possible. The role of Adult Protective Services is critical to that goal. Thank you for your consideration.