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June 7, 2017 Testimony in front of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, Ruth Small, For Adult Protective Services Funding

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Ruth Small. I am a senior citizen and a member of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). I am speaking today on behalf of the need to greatly increase funding for Adult Protective Services.

As you are aware Adult Protective Services protects vulnerable adults, particularly the elderly from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation living in the communities of Ohio. It is overseen by Department of Job and Family Services and is administered at the county level in each of the 88 counties.

A 2012 report showed that during fiscal year 2012, there were 15,475 reported cases of elder abuse in Ohio. However, just as they were then, the number of elder abuse cases are greatly underreported with estimated yearly abuse totaling between 90,000-115,000 elderly Ohioans, according to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio. I have seen examples myself. I have a friend whose daughter dominated and manipulated my friend, dispossessing her of all her savings and possessions, and having her displaced from her home. This is one example of so many unreported cases.

Although the provision of Adult Protective Services is a mandated service of counties, in the last budget \$7,488,125 was allocated to Adult Protective Service. This allocation was to offset the gross underfunding of previous budgets of less than \$500,000. In this budget we are once again providing small relief to address this issue in the amount of \$2,900,000. If this figure is divided evenly between the 88 counties in Ohio, that comes out to a little under \$33,000 per county to investigate and take action on all of the cases in the county. This amount barely allows for the hiring of staff to properly investigate these issues.

Senior abuse is a very serious issue and we should not accept our seniors being abused without holding proper investigations. That is not acceptable. There needs to be an increase in funding to this critical service. NOBLE is requesting that the amount funded be at least \$11.5 million to meet the current needs of this vital program.

As the number of elderly, particularly frail elderly, continues to increase in Ohio, it is vital that we give the counties the resources that are necessary to protect those who are being abused, neglected and exploited.

Thank you for your consideration.