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**OHIO HOUSE FINANCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CHAIRMAN ROEMER
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Tara Britton, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy

Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 110, specifically as it relates to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS). The Center for Community Solutions is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that aims to improve health, social and economic conditions through research, policy analysis and communication.

Adult Protective Services (APS)

The Center for Community Solutions has a long history of advocating for a strong adult protective services system in Ohio. In recent research we covered the rollout of statewide APS changes across the state, enacted legislation that increases the categories of mandatory reporters of suspected APS cases, as well as examined senior levies that are in place across Ohio. Even before the pandemic, older Ohioans could face the prospect of unjust circumstances such as financial exploitation from scam artists, friends or family and physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Older adults may find themselves in situations of neglect, or self-neglect, which can result in deterioration of physical and mental health. Individuals who experience these situations are four times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home and three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital. In light of the pandemic and social distancing required for all our safety, older adults, like all of us, have had less interaction with society, reducing the likelihood for mandatory reporters of elder abuse to recognize and report it. For these and many other reasons, Community Solutions is suggesting that funding for APS be increased in the ODJFS budget (line item 600534) from \$4.23 million each year of the biennium to \$10 million each year of the biennium. At current budget levels, each county receives around \$48,000 for APS. While we appreciate that this line item was increased in the last budget, it still pales in comparison to the need. This proposed increase would provide \$65,000 per county in Ohio, enough to fund one full time APS caseworker, plus an additional amount to be distributed to counties on a yet to be determined formula.

Multi-System Youth (MSY)

The Center for Community Solutions supports the recommendations of the Multi-System Youth (MSY) Action Plan and current state efforts to develop a program that can provide more comprehensive care for children with complex needs through OhioRISE (Resilience through Integrated Systems and Excellence). As these programs are fully developed, the state must ensure support continues to be available to work toward eliminating forced custody relinquishment for families and connecting Ohio's children in need through dedicated funding for MSY in the budgets of the Departments of Medicaid,

Developmental Disabilities and Job and Family Services. These funding sources were established in the last state budget and have shown that with dedicated resources and a cross-agency/cross-systems effort, children and families can access needed services, often closer to home, and with more support from communities. As of mid- February 2021, over 430 children across the state have been supported through the funding that sits within the Department of Medicaid, alone. Undoubtedly, many of these children and families would have been forced into custody relinquishment had it not been for this funding. We are grateful to Governor DeWine and his administration and the many champions for multi-system youth in this committee and across the legislature who have made this progress possible.

Safety-Net Services

We want to ensure safety-net services are as responsive as possible to the needs of Ohio families – something that is essential in the midst of the current public health and economic crises. This would include supporting policies that prioritize a swift economic recovery through efficient and effective access to relief and benefit programs. Counties need the capacity and resources to be able to process applications for programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure families are able to meet their most immediate needs. Improving safety-net services also requires timely and accessible data to identify gaps in services. Community Solutions supports budget policies that enhance data transparency.

As a member of Advocates for Ohio's Future and its work group that focuses on a long-term plan for TANF, we thank the Department of Job and Family Services for continuing to work with us to fully understand and improve TANF in Ohio. As part of achieving overall goals for TANF, it's important that the work to improve the program focus on the immediate, emergency needs of low-income children and families by investing in the core components of the program including emergency assistance (PRC)/work supports, food, housing, income-support, and child care and ensure unspent TANF dollars are reinvested into sustainable core programs to increase the security of low-income families, expand job training and work opportunities and improve educational and health outcomes of low-income children. We look forward to working with the administration and the legislature to ensure TANF is focused on the needs of Ohio families living in deep poverty without getting pulled in too many different directions.

Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues. We appreciate the attention devoted to health and human services throughout the subcommittee process.

Please reach out for any additional information or follow up questions.

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