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**Testimony of Barbara Riley, Chair, Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition
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Am.Sub. HB110 Ohio Senate Finance Committee**

Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in regard to the 2022/2023 Biennial Budget Bill. I am Barbara Riley, Chair of the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition, a group of seniors and their caregivers who have come together to make certain that the voice of Ohio's seniors is heard in the development of public policy affecting us. As some of you know, I previously served as both the Director of the Ohio Department of Aging and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services; and in those positions I became acutely aware of the surging social and financial costs of our increasingly aging population. I am not going to report to you on those statistics as they are readily available through the Miami University Scripps Gerontology Center; rather I would like to focus on the very real ramifications to seniors and their caregivers of the provisions in HB 110.

- **First, we urge you to provide a 1% increase in SFY 2022 and a 5% increase in SFY 2023 in reimbursement for home and community based services in the Medicaid line item 651-525. The PASSORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waivers are within this line item, and have been seriously underfunded for many years.**

The current stagnant reimbursement rates have meant that home and community based care agencies are unable to hire, train and retain sufficient staff to meet the home care needs of Ohio's older adults and those with disabilities. There are more than 2000 older individuals now on a waiting list for PASSPORT services. But please know that this means that those who are private pay consumers are waiting, too. Home care is not available for all who need it, regardless of whether the state or the family is paying. This means that we end up in far more costly settings, which we neither need nor want. This is bad news for the state budget and for your constituents.

- **Second, the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition is asking that you increase the appropriations for Senior Community Services to at least \$10 million in each year. All 490-411 is used to provide services such as transportation, meals, and personal care services.**

In 2001 this line item was funded at \$16 million. Our needs and numbers have not decreased, they have increased! Over the years I have referred to this line item as "Medicaid Prevention Funding", as it provides a number of services to those of us who are not yet Medicaid eligible. By doing so we are able to stay in our own homes, and be nearly self-reliant. Often all we need is transportation to a

doctor, a home delivered meal, an aide to help keep our home clean, or someone to cook a meal, etc. These are the very services that can keep us home and divert us from Medicaid dependence. We ask that you fund this line at \$10 million and stipulate that the funds be widely available to Area Agencies on Aging to distribute as necessary in their communities.

- **Finally, we are requesting that you retain the House added provision for the credentialing of those agencies and individuals who are providing the in-home services we need and want. Only three other states do not license or certify home care services. Only three other states do not protect their older citizens when they opt for care at home.**

This provision provides consistent minimum standards for in-home care and assures private pay consumers that the agency or person they hire has complied with those standards. Among those who contact the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition, this is one of their biggest concerns – that the care they need is not required to meet any specific criteria. You have the opportunity to put their minds at ease.

We also would like to thank the General Assembly for adding funding to Adult Protective services, allowing for each county to hire at least one person dedicated to those services. Older Ohioans too often suffer from physical, mental and financial abuse and neglect, as well as self-neglect, all of which have been made more problematic by the isolation inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We ask that you retain these funding levels which will provide essential protective services for adults.

Even in these difficult times, Ohio has been able to survive financially, but it is raining on our older, frailer, and susceptible adults. We ask that you seriously consider our needs as you deliberate on HB110. Thank you for your time and attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions.