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Senate Health Committee
House Bill 110 – Interested Party
County Commissioners Association of Ohio

May 4, 2021

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony on Substitute House Bill 110 (HB 110).

Counties administer many human services programs to Ohioans on behalf of the state. County commissioners oversee local job and family service agencies (CDJFSs), public children services agencies (PCSAs) and child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs).

During the last biennium, the DeWine administration and General Assembly significantly increased the state general revenue fund allocation to the state child protective system. CCAO remains grateful for this investment and is pleased to see it retained in the current version of the budget. County PCSAs are still working hard to stabilize the child protective system. The number of children in foster care remains high due to the addiction epidemic and pandemic and placement costs also continue to rise. Workforce challenges also remain for PCSAs as workers leave due to stress and secondary trauma.

The children services system is experiencing reform at both the state and federal level. While HB 110 does include some additional investments for these policy shifts, these resources solely address state costs. At the end of the 133rd General Assembly, the legislature created the state Kinship Support Program through the passage of Senate Bill 310. This program will increase the number of caregivers receiving per diems from the county. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) estimates the cost to counties will be an additional \$25 million in each year of the biennium. HB 110 does not include additional dollars for counties to account for this increased cost.

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) will be implemented nationwide by October 1, 2021. Through dramatic federal funding changes, Family First shifts the focus of the child welfare system to prevention – keeping children out of foster care and with their families – by encouraging states to support families through evidence-based programs in mental health services, substance abuse treatment and improved parenting skills. While the federal government will provide a 50% match for funding these programs, the other 50% of the cost will fall to the states.

Additionally, Family First ends federal reimbursement of placement costs for children in institutional settings that do not meet a new standard called Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP). PCSAs will be able to place children in non-QRTP settings through 2024, but if the residential center is not a QRTP, PCSAs will not be able to receive federal reimbursement for those placement costs. Because it is estimated that many of



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Ohio's residential centers will not meet this requirement by October 1, 2021, we anticipate an increase in county share of placement costs.

The combination of increased children in foster care, higher placement costs, the new Kinship Support Program and the implementation of Family First will put more financial strain on the child protective system in Ohio. Without additional resources to respond to these changes, counties will not be able to effectuate change in the system. CCAO respectfully requests the inclusion of an additional \$50 million in the State Child Protection Allocation housed in ALI 600523 to address these new costs to the system.

CCAO supports the continued investment in multi-system youth in HB 110 including the \$25 million for placement costs and the \$32 million over the biennium to prevent custody relinquishment.

CCAO supports the nearly \$3 million per fiscal year increase to the state match allocation for county CSEAs. This allocation has been flat funded since FY12 while the workload of CSEAs has increased. One in three Ohio children are impacted by Ohio's child support system, and the services our CSEAs provide them are essential.

County job and family service agencies (CDJFS) administer several programs to Ohioans, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) and Medicaid. While caseloads have increased for these programs, local program support dollars have decreased. The funding per SNAP/Medicaid participant is currently \$17.79, the lowest the state has ever provided. CCAO supports the Ohio Job and Family Service Directors' Association request for an additional \$7.7 million per fiscal year for the administration of these programs. This funding will allow CDJFSs to remain timely in processing applications and determinations, investigating fraud and providing quality customer service.

CCAO supports the \$1.49 million increase in the state allocation to adult protective services (APS) and thanks the House for its investment in this critical area. CDJFSs administer a uniform APS program for older adults who require protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. It is estimated that this funding will cover at least one full time APS caseworker per county (\$65,000/county).

HB 110 retains FY21 levels of funding for family and children first councils (FCFCs). These councils work to reduce duplication of services and to help families navigate health, social, and human services. Additionally, the councils have been integral in distributing multi-system youth custody relinquishment funding across the counties. In order to perform these functions, regardless of size, each county was allocated \$20,000. This amount was decreased in FY10 to \$15,750 per county. The councils serve a crucial role in administratively coordinating services for children in our counties and will continue in that role as even more transformation happens in this area with the implementation of the Family First and OhioRISE. CCAO requests an increase in the annual allocation to councils to bring FCFCs to \$30,000 per county. The bill also allows the continuation of family and children first flexible spending pools, which will provide flexibility for our counties.

HB 110 currently increases the eligibility for publicly funded child care to 138% of the federal poverty level. Counties administer the publicly funded child care programs that help eligible families pay for child care. This subsidized care allows more parents and caregivers to enter the workforce and build careers. It is an important component to many families in escaping the cycle of poverty. Child care is a vital work support program and CCAO supports increasing the eligibility threshold to 150% of the federal poverty level.

HB 110 includes a provision that allows a board of county commissioners to decrease the size of their local ADAMHS board to between five and nine members. The board of county commissioners would appoint 80% of the spots on the board and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services would appoint the remaining 20%. The commissioners would have a three year window from the effective date of the bill to make the change. CCAO is supportive of this permissive ability to determine the composition of a local board and supports the majority of the appointment authority remaining at the local level. The bill also includes a provision

that would mandate any newly created board have between five and nine members. CCAO is seeking an amendment that would also provide an option for a newly created board to have 18 members, if the district chooses to do so.

HB 110 creates the Task Force on Streamlining County Level-Information Access to study and make recommendations on how CDJFSs, PCSAs, CSEAs, and OhioMeansJobs centers can streamline access to information across systems. County commissioners oversee these entities across the state and respectfully request to be included on the Task Force. CCAO requests that association members (one representing a small county, one representing a medium county, and one representing a large county) be appointed to the Task Force to provide the commissioner perspective. CCAO is supportive of the overall goal of the Task Force.

As you discuss the priorities for Ohio's operating budget for this biennium, CCAO believes it is essential for the General Assembly to consider and preserve these investments in crucial services provided to Ohioans. Thank you for your consideration.