

Written Testimony of Ohio Advisory Council for Aging

Lori Wengerd, Chair • Phil Walton, Vice Chair

Ohio Department of Aging

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Columbus, OH 43215-2406

Senate Health Committee

Stephen Huffman, Chairman

Ohio FY2022-2023 Budget Bill (HB 110)

May 4, 2021

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as you consider proposed State Operating Budget FY2022-2023.

As Chair of the Ohio Advisory Council for Aging (OACA), I am writing on behalf of the eleven governor-appointed members representing every region in the state. We, as a body, are responding to Ohio House Bill HB110 and providing written testimony regarding the impending Senate budget hearings.

During this unprecedented time in our state's economic history, OACA recognizes the urgency of passing a balanced biennial budget amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on the State of Ohio. As the Council also recognizes the importance of maintaining Ohio's safety-net programs managed by the Ohio Department of Aging, we want to provide input on the funding of three GRF line-items:

- a newly introduced line-item, Statewide Aging Initiatives (GRF: 490507)
- Senior Community Services (GRF: 490411)
- and the Alzheimer's and Other Dementia Respite Program (GRF: 490414)

The OACA affirms the importance of the entirety of the ODA budget as submitted by Governor DeWine, which allows the ODA to address and fund community-based long-term care services, the long-term care ombudsman program, and senior community outreach and education programs that support the well-being of older adults in our State.

The OACA wants to emphasize that our State's older adult population is comprised of multiple racial and ethnic groups, resides in both urban and rural area, and has varying incomes, mobility limitations, and health challenges that complicate the ability to live independently even in the best of economic and public health times. If critical and cost-effective services such as home-delivered meals, home health care, caregiver support, transportation, and other in-home and community supports are not in place, the result will be increased risks for abuse, neglect, and exploitation; increased nursing home admissions; decreased quality of life for millions of our fellow residents; and escalation of expensive health care needs that would have a much more detrimental impact on the State of Ohio's budget. As stated by ODA Director Ursel McElroy, in order to reduce future spending on costly sick care in later life, Ohio must support early interventions and healthy aging.

STATEWIDE AGING INITIATIVES

The OACA endorses the new GRF line item “Statewide Aging Initiatives (Section: 209.30).” The Council commends the Ohio Department of Aging and its partners for the release of the Strategic Action Plan on Aging (**SAPA**) — **a prioritized plan to advance elder justice and equity and achieve optimal health and wellbeing for older Ohioans.** (*Ohio 2020-2022 Strategic Action Plan on Aging*)

As important as the SAPA is to Ohio's future, the as-passed by House version of HB 110 provides no provision for this new initiative. In addition to supporting quality improvement programs within the Department of Health, the funds for Statewide Aging Initiatives are necessary to support the goals of the SAPA — many of which align with the federally approved State Plan on Aging and the State Health Improvement Plan to eliminate disparities among the aging populations, improve elder justice, and promote equity. (*Redbook, LBO, Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal, Ohio Department of Aging, Ryan Sherrock, Economist, February 2021.*)

The OACA believes that protecting older adults, especially the most medically, socially, and financially vulnerable, must become a legislative priority that is adequately supported. Funding is needed to fully ensure the **Strategic Action Plan on Aging can guarantee that all Ohioans live longer, healthier lives with dignity and autonomy, and that disparities and inequities among older Ohioans are eliminated.** This will only be “achieved by fostering and promoting systems, policies, and beliefs that value aging, dismantle ageism, and create an age-integrated society that supports older Ohioans to live longer, healthier lives with dignity and autonomy.” (*Ohio 2020-2022 Strategic Action Plan on Aging*)

*Governor's Proposed Budget - GRF ALI 490507, Statewide Aging Initiatives \$14,000,000 (FY2022), and \$9,000,000 (FY2023) • **as-passed-by-House version HB110: \$0 (FY2022 & FY2023)***

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

OACA commends Governor DeWine and the Ohio House Finance Committee for the proposed increase in the Senior Community Services (Section: 209.30) line item. This line item supports community-based services assisting seniors in living independently in their own homes and communities. Yet, consistent funding isn't enough. The OACA supports investing in the safety and well-being of the elders among us. The projected increase in the number of older adults will not be supported by the current budgeted amount and, without planning for future increases, we can do little to help older adults remain safe in the communities of their choice and to safeguard programs that address elder abuse, exploitation, and disparity. If Ohio is to take seriously its investment in the well-being and safety of all Ohio residents as we age, the OACA must be vocal in its support for future increases above the now-current proposed budget.

*Governor's Proposed Budget - GRF ALI 490411, Senior Community Services: \$6,549,253 (FY2021), \$8,723,995 (FY2022) and \$8,662,042 (FY2023) • **as-passed-by-House version HB110: \$8,723,995 (FY2022) and \$8,662,042 (FY2023)***

ALZHEIMER'S AND OTHER DEMENTIAS RESPITE PROGRAM

Finally, OACA applauds the Governor's and Ohio House Finance Committee's proposal to increase funding for the Alzheimer Respite Program. Approximately 220,000 Ohioans aged 65 and older have Alzheimer's disease. This number is expected to grow to 250,000 in just four short years. There are more than 600,000 Ohioans caring for a family member with Alzheimer's. In 2017, those caregivers provided approximately 684,000,000 hours of care — the equivalent of \$8,633,000,000 if there were no family members to do the work. (<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/ohio-alzheimers-facts-figures-2018.pdf>) Statistics show that the average duration of a caregiver's role is 4 years, with 15% of caregivers providing care for more than 10 years. Measured by duration of care, Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers provide care, on average, 1 to 4 years longer than those caring for someone with an illness other than Alzheimer's. (*Alzheimer's Association, 2015*). Adequate funding for respite care will help those suffering from Alzheimer's remain in their homes for as long as possible — and will support those providing their care.

*Governor's and HB 110 proposed budget - GRF ALI 490414, Alzheimer's and Other Dementia Respite Program \$2,245,720 (FY2021) \$2,495,245 (FY2022) and \$2,495,245 (FY2023) • **\$2,495,245 (FY2022) and \$2,495,245 (FY2023)***

As our current budget debate so painfully underscores the needs of multiple populations and age groups, the fact is that Ohio must remain firmly committed to maintaining and improving the safety-net services that are vital and essential to older adults today, and those that are cost-effective in the long-term. The future of our most vulnerable citizens must be a priority in the FY 2022-2023 budget and beyond.

Thank you for your time and commitment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Lori Wengerd at lwengerd@homecareassistance.com

Sincerely,

Lori Wengerd, OACA Chair

Phil Walton, OACA Vice Chair

Semanthie Brooks, OACA Policy Committee Chair