



Testimony on HB 110

Kristen Henry, Executive Director
Advocacy & Protective Services, Inc. (APSI)

Senate Health Committee
May 6, 2021

Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee:

On behalf of Advocacy & Protective Services, Inc. (APSI) and our over 3,200 clients across the State of Ohio, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. APSI is a statewide non-profit organization that contracts with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) pursuant to Ohio Rev. Code § 5123.56 to provide guardianship and other protective services to adults with developmental disabilities throughout the state. We join with the many other advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities in asking you to maintain and build upon the initiatives in HB 110 to ensure that the individuals we serve have the supports they need to be healthy, safe, and thriving in their communities.

APSI's core purpose is to provide guardianship and other protective services for adults with developmental disabilities who do not have a family member or other natural support to assist them with decision-making. APSI primarily serves as guardian of the person for our clients, who have a wide range of abilities, co-occurring conditions, and desires for their lives. In this role, we are appointed by county Probate Judges to make decisions on behalf of our clients, providing consent for their medical care, living arrangements, and other services. The ongoing pandemic has challenged APSI to meet our clients' needs in new ways, as we have been limited in conducting routine in-person visits. But through partnerships with services providers, county boards, and other team members, we have connected with our clients virtually to ensure their needs continue to be met.

We are grateful for Governor DeWine's and DODD's priorities in HB 110 that will benefit our clients, including maintaining the recently-implemented increases for Medicaid waiver rates that were necessary to build Ohio's direct support professional (DSP) workforce. APSI now asks for your support to take those initiatives further to ensure that our clients have the services and supports they need.

Increase Funding for Protective Services (ALI 320412)

APSI's services are funded almost entirely by DODD, which ensures that we can serve individuals without regard for their financial resources. This funding includes GRF dollars from DODD's Protective Services line item. DODD has requested an increase of 2.9% (\$68K) in FY22 and 6.1% (\$150K) in FY23 because of the growing need for our services. This increase would be the first additional GRF dollars for Protective Services since FY17. Yet in that time, APSI has nearly tripled the number of new clients we have taken on annually, from 36 in FY18, to 69 in FY19 and 67 in FY20, to over 80 already in FY21 (with a projected total of over 110 by the end of FY21).

APSI appreciates DODD's support for additional funding for our services, and requests this committee's support to build on DODD's request by adjusting the increased funding to 6.8% (\$164K) in FY22 and 2.9% (\$76K) in FY23.

Invest in Direct Service Professional Workforce

Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) are critically important for APSI's clients in every environment where they live and spend their days. Many APSI clients do not have "natural supports"—family members who are able to provide unpaid care in the absence of DSPs—so this workforce is essential to their health, safety, and quality of life. This committee has heard from many advocates about the ongoing workforce crisis that has become even more urgent during the pandemic.

As our clients' guardian, APSI has a duty to choose the residential setting that best meets each individual's specific needs, and we have clients who live in every type of setting in Ohio. Unfortunately, the DSP workforce crisis has forced some of our clients to move to large institutional settings instead of smaller community-based homes. It is critically important that Ohio ensure that DSPs are available to serve individuals in all settings.

APSI joins with other advocates in asking you to support DSPs and the individuals they serve by increasing Medicaid waiver rates for residential, transportation, and day services by 5% each year of the biennium.

Support the Development of Services for Multi-System Adults

All of APSI's clients have a developmental disability, and over 70% of the individuals we serve would be considered "multi-system adults" because they have a co-occurring mental health condition, criminal justice system involvement, or other system connection. As the guardians and advocates for our clients, we experience first-hand the lack of connection and coordination between these systems. Many of these systems are not equipped to meet the unique needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

APSI is encouraged by the proposals in the budget of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to use the strategies and lessons learned from Ohio's successful efforts to address the needs of multi-system youth for multi-system adults like our clients. We ask for your support for these initiatives to improve care coordination and fill gaps in resources throughout Ohio, and we look forward to partnering with the state agencies in this work.

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Thank you for the opportunity to share these issues that are important to APSI and our clients. We appreciate your interest in supporting the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities across the state, and we look forward to working with you throughout the budget process on these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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