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

Members of the Senate Health Committee we appreciate the opportunity to submit 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 increasing 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 5% increase in each year in reimbursement for home and community based services in the Medicaid line item 651-525. The PASSPORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waivers are within this line item, and have been seriously underfunded for many years. The current stagnant reimbursement rates have contributed to the 2000 older individuals now on a waiting list for PASSPORT services. Waiting lists for the waivers mean that we end up in far more costly settings that we neither need nor want. This is unconscionable.**

Currently the ability of we older Ohioans to remain in our own homes, where we are healthier and happier, is adversely affected by the fact that the individuals who provide home care services do not earn a wage sufficient to attract the best qualified staff or to financially allow them to provide for their families. This results in large staff turnover, which means I do not have the ability to rely on consistent care, provided by someone we know and trust. Thank goodness for those who take on these positions out of a desire to help and a sense of fulfillment. The current waiting lists for the Medicaid Waivers are often due to the inability of HCBS providers to retain and hire qualified staff.

- **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. ALI 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 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 or at least able to supplement these community services with unpaid family and friend caregivers. In the last budget the increase provided in this line was used for the Senior Farmers Market, which although helpful nutritionally, was far too restrictive to be of real benefit to the majority of us needing assistance with things such as transportation to a doctor, a home delivered meal, an aide to help keep our home clean, someone to cook a meal, etc. These are the services that can divert someone from Medicaid dependence. We ask that you fund this line at \$10 million and stipulate that the funds be more widely available to Area Agencies on Aging to distribute as necessary.

- **Finally, we are very appreciative of the increase in adult protective services which will allow each county to fund at least one worker dedicated to this vital need.**

Older Ohioans can suffer from physical, mental and financial abuse and neglect, as well as self-neglect, which has been made even more problematic by the isolation inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We ask that you retain the funding levels which will provide these essential protective services.

On a general basis, 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 HB 110. Thank you for your time and attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions.