



## Advocates for Ohio's Future

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## DESPITE GAINS, TOO MANY HOLES REMAIN IN STATE'S SAFETY NET

COLUMBUS - For vulnerable Ohioans, the FY2012-13 budget signed by Governor Kasich yesterday has improved from the budget introduced in March. According to Advocates for Ohio's Future, it has built upon some of the strong foundations for health care reform, juvenile justice and early care & education in the Governor's budget.

The legislature also added provisions supporting home and community services for seniors and people with disabilities as well as mental health services; however, AOF coalition members are concerned that as more people need health and human services, the budget will fail to meet the rising demand and will cripple local social services.

While AOF has assurances from the Governor's Office that funding for emergency food assistance will be addressed by the administration, other concerns remain. "Ohio is a state in crisis," said AOF Co-Chair Gayle Channing Tenenbaum, "and this budget won't do enough to help children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities through the recession, especially when it comes to local government service delivery."

Targeted advocacy by Advocates for Ohio's Future, its coalition partners, and a network of grassroots supporters across the state resulted in a number of gains over the biennium for vulnerable Ohioans, including:

- Maintained Medicaid eligibility and "optional" services;
- Increased support for PASSPORT by \$38 million over the original recommendation;
- Increased support for behavioral health by \$26.9 million;
- Restored funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers (\$5.46 million);
- Restored partial funding for kinship care (\$8.4 of \$10 million) and full funding for adoption subsidies (\$7 million) in child welfare;
- Restored \$3 million cut by the House to Help Me Grow
- Turned back an attempt to divert \$10 million from the Ohio Housing Trust Fund to county recorders, maintaining the entire fund for affordable housing; and
- Restored \$4 million cut to funding for Intermediate Care Facilities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Nevertheless, cuts to local government social services strike at the foundation of the human service delivery system, said AOF Co-Chair Margaret Hulbert. Further reliance

on property taxes for local human service levies will cause even greater inequity across counties, particularly in those counties that don't have levies, and the impending layoff of local government employees will hurt Ohio's economy.

"The Governor and the legislature made a commitment in this budget to jump-start Ohio's economy with jobs," Hulbert said. "What they failed to realize is that subsidized child care and local government social services constitute vital workforce supports. These services help our neighbors remain productive and keep them from sliding further into poverty and desperation."

While Channing Tenenbaum acknowledged that significant policy shifts in long-term care and behavioral health were realized in this budget, she said that even those gains were overshadowed by inadequate funding of the service delivery infrastructure. "Over the next two years, I fear we will see a safety net with too many holes to keep vulnerable children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities from falling through," she said. "Given the gloomy economic predictions for the next two years, I have to wonder whether enough jobs will truly materialize before the already long lines for food, mental health and addiction services, and care for people with physical and intellectual disabilities grow even longer. Furthermore, I am greatly concerned about the number of people working in the agencies delivering these services who will be losing their jobs starting today because of local government cuts."

The membership of Advocates for Ohio's Future will continue to work with the Kasich Administration and the legislature to educate them on the impact of these local government cuts to people across Ohio who need these health and human services.

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*Advocates for Ohio's Future works to maintain vital public services - health, human services, and early care & education - at a level that meets people's basic needs and protects our state's most vulnerable populations.*