



Advocates for Ohio's Future

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ADVOCATES OFFER POLICIES FOR MID-BIENNIUM REVIEW

COLUMBUS – Advocates for Ohio's Future today offered five areas for consideration as the Kasich Administration prepares to release, and the General Assembly plans to take up, the mid-biennium review.

Noting that the bills scheduled to be unveiled this week go beyond the usual “corrections” approach, AOF Co-Chair Gayle Channing Tenenbaum said that the statewide health, human service, and early care & education coalition determined that a broad platform was appropriate. “As the state continues to struggle with recession-related challenges, AOF is hopeful that an improving economy will help rebuild Ohio’s infrastructure and support communities devastated by foreclosure and joblessness,” Channing Tenenbaum said. “Taken together, these policies will not only meet people’s basic needs and protect our state’s vulnerable populations, but will also support all Ohioans to participate in the recovery.”

The five areas are jobs and workforce development, critical system reforms and improved service-delivery methods, investment in those system reforms, early care & education, and evaluating and developing effective prescription practices. “The best way to support Ohioans with temporary or emergency needs is to make sure that Ohio rebounds from the recession offering good jobs with livable wages to people at all levels of income and education,” Co-Chair Mark Davis said. “Job creation and workforce development hold the most promise for strengthening our communities.

“But in the near term,” he cautioned, “vital public services that support Ohio’s workforce and those looking for employment – including food and housing security, health care, mental health and addiction services, and quality child care – must be available.” Davis pointed to “employment first” for people with developmental disabilities and fair rates for those who provide care to vulnerable populations as two employment and compensation examples within health and human services.

Channing Tenenbaum went on to say that Ohio should build on the reforms in last year’s budget bill that gave the executive branch broad discretion in implementing big changes in long-term care, health care, and behavioral health. “As changes are introduced, there must also be ample opportunity for genuine stakeholder input from consumers, their families, and the community at large,” she said. “Infrastructure at the state and county level needs to be in place to ensure that services are available in a timely manner and, once services are delivered, that claims are processed accurately.”

That is especially true in proposed reforms in long-term care and community behavioral health programs, Davis added. “If the mid-biennium review is to be successful in supporting reforms and saving money in the long term, sufficient investments must be made in the community behavioral health and waiver systems,” he said. “There should be adequate funding to ensure that home and community care is a viable option in Ohio for seniors as well as for people with disabilities of all ages.” Likewise, adequate investment in opiate addiction treatment is also needed to address the opiate problem in Ohio, rather than simply reducing the supply of opiates.

Channing Tenenbaum said that the coalition is concerned with the questionable use of high dose or multiple medications in developmental disabilities, child welfare, aging, and other systems funded by Medicaid. “The proper use of medication, tailored to the unique individual needs of the person, is critical to the health and well-being of consumers in these systems,” she said. “Overmedication can be dangerous and expensive, harming adults and posing especially dangerous risks for children,” added Channing Tenenbaum, “AOF recommends continued efforts and leadership of the BEACON Council to address this important issue, beginning with Ohio’s children.”

Finally, Davis suggested that Ohio has a unique opportunity in the Race to the Top grant to do more than provide a necessary resource – child care – to working families. “The mid-biennium review should support the policies and funding necessary for full implementation of the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge goals to help our children enter school ready to learn,” he concluded.

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Advocates for Ohio’s Future is a statewide coalition of 270 local and statewide organizations that 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.