Safety Net Must be The Priority for Conference Committee

CLEVELAND - As legislators reach the final stretch of the budget debate, health and human service advocates say it is imperative that Ohio’s safety net receives the attention and investment it so desperately needs. At today’s news conference in Cleveland, advocates and consumers of safety net services urged the Conference Committee members, leadership of Ohio’s General Assembly and Governor Kasich to increase investment in vital health, human service and early care & education programs.

“Today you heard from area residents who have benefited from health, human service and early care & education programs,” Deborah Nebel, Director of Public Policy for Linking Employment, Abilities & Potential (LEAP), stated. “These individuals are our neighbors, friends and relatives who rely on services such as PASSPORT, food assistance, Help Me Grow, community mental health services, and long term care services and supports that help younger persons with disabilities live in the community. While these individuals have stories of successfully receiving services, we know that hundreds and maybe even thousands of Cuyahoga County residents don’t get services because the safety net cannot meet the need in our community.”

Scott Britton, Coordinator for Advocates for Ohio’s Future, said, “After years of cuts, the safety net is tattered, and this budget does not do enough to increase the capacity in the community.” He continued, “Without additional investments in health, human service and early care & education programs, not only will our communities not be able to meet the increasing demand, but the positive reform proposals in the budget will fall flat. If such reforms included in the budget like rebalancing long-term care and integrating behavioral health care with physical health care are not done right, with an appropriate level of community infrastructure, our State will end up spending more in the long run for seniors, individuals with disabilities and individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.”

Any new revenue identified during the final weeks of the budget process must be prioritized for health, human service and early care & education. These services support Ohio’s vulnerable children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities.

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.