



Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association

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Joel Potts, Executive Director

Ohio Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

Main Operating Budget – House Bill 49

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Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Tavares, and members of the Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding House Bill 49. My name is Joel Potts and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association.

County departments of job and family services (CDJFS) agencies administer one of the largest health, human service and workforce systems in the nation. At any point in time, one in four Ohioans depend on the local JFS system to help meet basic needs including healthcare and food, improve job opportunities, collect child support, escape poverty and be safe. Through smart investments of federal, state and local resources, Ohio will continue to improve our services to protect our most vulnerable citizens, help individuals reduce dependency on public assistance programs, and improve the economy.

Systems operated through the local agencies include cash assistance, food assistance, childcare, Medicaid (including long-term care, children's health insurance and services to aged, blind and disabled), adoption, adult protective services, child protective services, foster care, local workforce initiatives and child support programs.

Today there is unparalleled pressure on the protective services system. In recent years Ohio has invested heavily in treatment, awareness, education, law enforcement and community support services around the opioid epidemic. But in one extremely important area this battle, the State has failed to partner with counties in the mission to protect and serve the children in drug addicted households. We are also seeing similar parallels in adult protective services.

County agencies are on the front line, struggling to ensure child and senior safety and well-being. We are bearing the brunt of the opiate surge with little to no help from the state for this vital protection system. Local governments already heavily invest in children services, leading the nation for support, but help is needed.

We understand the current revenue shortfalls you are grappling with for upcoming biennium. But given the crisis level in child protection and the long-term damage that will be inflicted upon these innocent victims without the proper intervention and support necessary to help stabilize them and their families, Not investing additional dollars in this system will result in increased costs to the state as these children reach adulthood with significant trauma that was, in many instances, not properly addressed due to budget constraints.

Therefore we are requesting a significant new investment in child protection of \$15 million annually to boost local funds already being utilized to mitigate the damage being inflicted on children. We are also requesting additional funding to continue to build a strong foundation for Ohio's adult protective services system.

I recognize our requests for additional funding to address the opiate crisis is a big ask of the state. However, it is a huge ask and unrealistic expectation that local governments can continue to bear the impact of the opiate crisis to the children, parents, grandparents, kin, and foster parents alone. A generation of children and our communities are at risk and we need your help.

Local governments in Ohio already invest more dollars in the child protective services system than any other state in the nation. We are not asking you to take on the challenges to our communities created by the opiate crisis, or to supplant dollars already being utilized to address this healthcare crisis. The investment we seek will enhance and support our efforts to help the children in our care, many of whom have witnessed their parents drug use, or worse, overdose.

Along with our request for additional resources, Medicaid expansion has been critical in ensuring that local communities can fund necessary rehabilitation treatment for addicted parents and caregivers. We respectfully request that as the legislature wrestles with public policy decisions around Medicaid coverage for adults, you prioritize the ability to serve these vulnerable populations.

The following budget recommendations from the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association would significantly increase our ability to protect the invisible victims of the opiate crisis. Some of these recommendations would not require an increase in general revenue funds.

OJFSDA Budget Requests Include:

Keeping children safe: Child Protective Services – Maintain and Increase \$15M Proposed Additional Investment

In Ohio, half of all children taken into protective custody last year had parental drug use identified at the time of removal. Among the infants in care, 70% are there due to their parents' opiate addiction. Families who abuse opiates consume the most child-protection resources. The amount of casework necessary for PCSA's in opiate households is often both far more complex and time-consuming. These cases also remain open much longer than in non-opiate related cases. The increase in drug-related cases requires more foster care placements, kinship services, treatment for children who may have substance problems themselves, and resources for the trauma and other behavioral health issues suffered by children in drug addicted homes.

Additional resources will ensure caseworkers can invest the time these cases require to deliver quality core casework services, and help guarantee appropriate placement options to safeguard the health and safety of the innocent victims of Ohio's still-growing opiate epidemic. Furthermore, increases in state funding will also leverage additional federal funding with a \$0.62 match for every dollar invested in eligible foster care placements.

Provide Publicly Funded Child Care for Some Kinship Caregivers (Maintain the Proposed \$10 million annual investment of TANF resources)

When a child needs to be removed from his or her home due to unsafe conditions or neglect, children services workers first check to see if there is a suitable extended family member, or kin, to care for the child. Kinship placements are less traumatic for the child than being placed with an unfamiliar family or in an unfamiliar community. Kinship placements are more stable while permanency options are explored, and are less expensive than foster home placements.

One of the most significant barriers counties encounter while exploring potential kin placements is the cost kinship caregivers face in taking on the obligation of financing child care for the wards they have brought into their home. To help provide quality care for children in crisis and reduce costs to the overall child protective services system, OJFSDA recommends kinship caregivers be allowed to access publicly funded child care regardless of income. Such an investment and policy change would enhance the number of kinship caregivers and therefore improve outcomes for children while decreasing the costs to foster care and the child protective services system.

Adult Protective Services – Maintain Proposed Increased Investment and Increase Funding

The state and counties are actively engaged in a major restructuring of the Adult Protective Services program as a result of changes being implemented from the last biennial budget. Due to this statewide effort, counties have experienced an increased number of reports of suspected elder abuse. A recent survey showed 85% of respondents had seen an increase in APS referrals just in the past two years, and over 40 percent have seen that increase continue within the past six months.

Sadly, the scourge of opiates is also impacting the senior population of the state with increased exploitation of the elderly. Forty percent of counties report an increase in APS referrals directly attributable to opiate abuse. Now more than ever counties need to have the capacity to be able to respond to requests for help from Ohio's seniors.

Currently counties receive \$30,000 per year in state adult protective services funding. This does not cover even one full-time caseworker in each county. Coming into the budget deliberations, we propose increasing the current \$2.64 Million/year appropriation to \$65,000 per county, or a total of \$5.72 Million annually statewide. This would provide each county with at least one FTE dedicated to adult protective services and ensure some capacity at the local level to investigate alleged elder abuse. We respectfully request you maintain the proposed 10 percent increase to APS programs, totaling an additional \$250,000 per year.

In addition, the House-passed budget incorporated House Bill 78 into the legislation which would make numerous changes to the APS program. While we support many of the provisions of the bill there are also some significant concerns which need to be resolved. We would recommend pulling this language from the budget and allowing HB 78 to be fully vetted through the committee process.

Other Budget Considerations

Child Support

Investing in Ohio's child support program is extremely cost effective, lifts children out of poverty, reduces dependency on public assistance programs and supports families. Families receiving welfare benefits will leave the program almost twice as fast as cases where no child support order is established or collections are made. There are over one-million children in Ohio needing support and local child support enforcement agencies successfully collect over \$1.7 billion a year for these families.

Ohio's program is a national model, collecting \$8.25 for every dollar invested: thirty-three percent above the national average. That means even a modest investment in the child support program of \$4 million would result in \$100 million to the children and families of the state.

Even without a General Revenue investment there are many things the legislature can do to support the child support program, alleviating costs to counties, increase efficiencies, speed up services and enhance collections. Senate Bill 70 was recently introduced and would provide numerous efficiencies to Ohio's system, without requiring an ongoing financial commitment. The proposed changes in the bill would streamline the administrative process, reduce the number of cases requiring court hearings, speed up collection and resolve many disputes quicker. This same legislation was proposed in the last General Assembly (Senate Bill 308) and passed the full Senate and House committee with unanimous support but unfortunately failed to reach the House floor for a final vote.

The changes outlined in this bill have been under consideration since first being recommended by the child support stakeholder reform group in 2002. Passage of this legislation would reduce costs locally and improve the child support system.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NET)

County job and family services agencies have questions around an Administration plan to transition responsibility for the Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) system from a county-based system to a state-led brokerage model in July 2018. County agencies and local communities are heavily vested in this program and changes in NET operations could have serious and significant unintended consequences on clients and community transportation systems. Little information is available on the state plans and OJFSDA will be working with the Administration and legislature over the next few months to ensure any changes to NET enhance transportation services already in place throughout the state while preserving existing local collaborations and shared services.

Food Assistance Employment and Training Funding

The association supports the provision added in the House-passed budget which would establish a new line within ODJFS for the State Director, in conjunction with the Chancellor of Higher Education, to utilize \$2 million per year as state match for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program (SNAP E&T). This would garner an additional \$2 million in federal funds and significantly enhance our ability to help food assistance recipients improve their employment opportunities and decrease dependency on the program. In conjunction with other stakeholders we would request an amendment to the language in order to not limit the types of training that may be supported through this fund.

Healthcare Reform

As options for the Medicaid program are explored, and as the entity responsible for providing direct services to clients, we respectfully request that counties are kept in mind for these program changes. System support, training and resources need to be in place to ensure successful and efficient implementation of program reforms. We welcome the opportunity to work with the members of the General Assembly and Administration to offer our experiences and expertise in working with these clients.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to working with you to finalize a budget which meets the needs of the citizens we serve.