



Advocates for Ohio's Future

510 East Mound Street, Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43215
614-602-2463 | 614-602-2464 | Fax 614-228-5150
www.advocatesforohio.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2011

CONTACT

Gayle Channing Tenenbaum, 614-226-3116
Margaret Hulbert, 513-266-2961

Safety Net Must be The Priority for Conference Committee

COLUMBUS - As legislators reach the final stretch of the budget debate, health and human service advocates are asking lawmakers to set aside \$37 million to invest in Ohio's safety net.

Yesterday, the state's Budget Director, Tim Keen, pointed to national and international factors that suggest Ohio will not return to prosperity in the next two years, referencing the gloomy May economic assessment by the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors.

"Wages are stagnant, unemployment remains high, gasoline and food prices are still up," said AOF Co-Chair Margaret Hulbert. "This is all the more reason to shore up Ohio's safety net for vulnerable children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities."

Based on revised revenue and Medicaid caseload projections, the Conference Committee expects to have no new revenue to appropriate. Throughout the budget debate, many organizations and constituents expected rosier economic predictions to offer legislators new money to plug into the budget.

One bit of good news from yesterday is that the state is expected to end the current fiscal year on June 30 with a \$187 million surplus. Keen recommended using that money to replenish the Rainy Day Fund.

Co-Chair Gayle Channing Tenenbaum supports restoration of the Rainy Day Fund, but contended, "For nearly one in three Ohioans who live in poverty as a result of these economic times, the Conference Committee is their final chance. We need to invest a portion of this money into services for people who are struggling—and who will continue to struggle—through this long recession."

Advocates for Ohio's Future is asking state lawmakers to designate \$37 million, roughly 20 percent of the \$187 million surplus, for health, human service, and early care & education programs.

- 30 -

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.