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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Budget Investments Needed to Support Low-Income Ohioans, Seniors, Children**

COLUMBUS -- Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF) implores the Ohio Senate to do the right thing, to use this budget adoption opportunity to provide all Ohioans with the opportunity to fully participate in our economic recovery and to provide a clear path up and out of poverty. This moment in Ohio's history will be judged by how we use our state's resources to strengthen families, our communities and our economy.

Currently there is only limited information available concerning the Senate's version of the 2016-17 biannual state budget. AOF will carefully review the full version as it becomes available and provide more analysis at that time.

AOF's budget priorities can be summarized as follows:

- **Establish person-centered work preparation and supports** to prepare Ohioans to acquire and maintain quality jobs, so they can support themselves and their families.
- **Invest in programs that support working families.** Unfortunately, a job does not always mean a living. Ohio needs to promote upward mobility in the workforce and a smoother transition to self-sufficiency by incrementally raising the eligibility of child care over the next four years, starting with a raise to 144 percent of the federal poverty level in 2016, and by making the ten percent state Earned Income Tax Credit refundable.
- **Build and strengthen Ohio's direct service workforce** – the people providing care for individuals who need assistance with activities of daily living. We support better outcomes of care, improved health of the general population, more efficient use of resources, and a sustainable wage for direct service workers.
- **Ensure the safety of older Ohioans in every county.** We support the allocation of \$20 million per fiscal year in the 2016-17 biennial budget for Adult Protective Services to ensure that older adults in all counties are safe from neglect, abuse and exploitation.
- **Improve permanency outcomes for abused and neglected children** by increasing funding for county Public Children Services Agencies through the State Child Protection Allocation (SCPA) by \$20 million per fiscal year. This will restore funding to 2009 levels.
- **Support housing projects and programs** by maintaining funding for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. Support critical projects and programs when revenues decline by creating the Ohio Housing Trust Fund Reserve, to be used in years when HTF revenues fall short of \$50 million.
- **Provide healthy food for millions of Ohioans** by increasing funding for the Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program to \$20 million per fiscal year over the 2016-17 biennial budget.

- **Continue extended health care coverage** through the Ohio Medicaid Program that maintains, without barriers or cuts, an affordable, obtainable, comprehensive benefit package for low income Ohioans.
- **Develop language that provides oversight, accountability, and timelines for implementation of behavioral health system reforms** to safeguard behavioral health service access and capacity, rebuild system infrastructure, and address workforce challenges.

Each of these issues must receive serious attention from the Senate before final action on the 2016-17 state budget. It is never too late to do the right thing.

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*Advocates for Ohio's Future is a statewide coalition of over 475 local and statewide organizations that promote health and human service budget and policy solutions so all Ohioans live better lives.*