



Advocates for Ohio's Future
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June 29, 2015

Governor John Kasich
Office of Governor John Kasich
77 S. High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor Kasich,

Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF), a coalition of over 475 participating organizations in the health and social services arena, wishes to take this opportunity to speak clearly and candidly about H.B. 64 which is before you for final consideration, possible veto and signing. First we are appreciative of your work and that of the members of the House and Senate on numerous provisions of the pending state budget. We also wish to clearly state our continued advocacy of a number of issues, which are not included in H.B. 64 but should be, given Ohio's positive economic growth.

Among the issues we advocated strongly for and were include in the final version of the budget:

Person-Centered Work Program – the intensive case management program initially proposed by you, which we supported, was adopted. The Healthier Buckeye Council grant program was also adopted, with an appropriation of \$11.5 million. These programs are steps forward in helping hard-to-serve people, especially young people, enter the workforce.

Food Assistance – The Ohio house provided \$2.75 million per year in additional funding and the senate provided \$2.5 million per year to direct hunger relief provided by the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. The Governor's as introduced budget provided \$14.5 million per year in support of the Ohio Food and Agricultural Clearance Programs operated by our statewide network. By supporting these critical hunger lifelines and providing \$19.75 million per year in the 2016-17 biennial budget for Ohio's Foodbanks, Ohio's leaders have signaled their commitment to ensuring their constituents have access to nutritious food.

Housing – the Housing Trust Fund was restored to its previous structure, and we sincerely appreciate your work and that of the members of the House and Senate who saw the need for this effective program to continue providing this needed assistance.

Of continued concern are the following issues, some of which include specific note of the need for your veto before signing:

Work Support Programs – Your initial proposal to increase entry-level child care eligibility from 125 percent to 130 percent FPL was not improved upon, and 12-month continuous eligibility was not adopted. Also, the state Earned Income Tax Credit of 10% of the federal EITC was not made refundable. AOF regrets these omissions in the budget. These measures are important to support low-wage working people struggling to make ends meet. We will continue to pursue these in the coming weeks and months.

Direct Care Workforce – The additional \$10.5 million sought to bring these workers up to a sustainable level was not appropriated. This workforce is the backbone of home and community based services and is vital to Ohio's efforts to support individuals in our communities to remain at home or other community settings of their choosing. This measure will continue to be advocated by AOF and we encourage your support as well.

Adult Protective Services – the \$20M per year sought to allow all counties to establish minimally adequate services was not obtained. This is also a high priority of AOF which we will continue to pursue and we urge your support as well.

Children’s Protective Services – At a time when revenues are available, the budget did not include the \$20 million per year sought to offset the \$53.5 million state disinvestments since 2009 and the further loss of \$17 million over the 2016-2017 biennium because of the TPPT. This leaves many counties unable to provide the necessary level of services needed for abused and neglected children and at the same time ensure that all children waiting in foster care find permanent homes. It is unacceptable to walk away and turn our back on this vulnerable and defenseless population.

Behavioral Health – requires that BH and MH services be integrated into Managed Care no later than January 1, 2018, and requires JMOC to sign off on any effort to implement prior to January 1, 2018. While AOF is appreciative of this change, we will continue to monitor and advocate for a system which should reflect the positive experiences of this past year plus with MyCare Ohio and avoid the mistakes made.

Medicaid – the major achievement in Medicaid was the continued coverage of the expansion population, albeit with the need for Controlling Board approval for the second half of SFY 2017. We appreciate restoration of eligibility to 200 percent FPL for pregnant women and for those needing breast or cervical cancer services. A limitation on the amount of resources that could be approved by the Controlling Board should be vetoed in order for Ohio’s current legislative approach to Medicaid to work. The inclusion of the House’s provisions for the Healthy Ohio initiative requirement to seek copays, deductibles and premiums for Ohioans living with no income up to 138 percent of poverty should be vetoed.

Sincerely,



Mark Davis, Co-Chair



Col Owens, Co-Chair



William Sundermeyer, State Director

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