



Advocates for Ohio's Future

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SENATE MUST PRIORITIZE ANY NEW REVENUE FOR SAFETY NET

COLUMBUS - In the midst of calls for new tax cuts and replenishing the rainy day fund, Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF) urged the Ohio Senate during a news conference today to designate any new revenue identified during budget discussions for health, human service, and early care & education programs that support vulnerable Ohioans.

Referring to what the Kasich Administration and House leadership have dubbed the Jobs Budget, AOF Co-Chair Gayle Channing Tenenbaum maintained that workforce supports - vital public services that help struggling Ohioans stay on their feet - must be adequately funded. "No matter how successful the Jobs Budget may be, we won't see a reduction in unemployment right away, nor a decrease in the 3,462,181 eligible to receive emergency food assistance," Channing Tenenbaum said. "At a time when a third of Ohioans are living below the income standard for self-sufficiency, roughly 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, we have to be sure that the budget provides our neighbors a lifeline to survive the aftermath of the Great Recession."

AOF Co-Chair Margaret Hulbert noted that a society is often judged by how its most vulnerable are treated. "After four years of budget cuts, the safety net is in shreds," she said. "Demand has increased sharply during the Great Recession, and many of our human service delivery systems cannot meet the rising demand we see for food, affordable housing, and behavioral health care, just to name a few."

While parts of the budget passed by the House of Representatives last week offer hope - maintaining Medicaid eligibility and optional services, restoring funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers, adding some funding to foodbanks, kinship care in child welfare, and Help Me Grow - AOF continues to express grave concerns about the lack of adequate funding across the board, but in particular to back up two of the boldest reform proposals: rebalancing long-term care and integrating behavioral health with physical health care.

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“We have serious concerns about the unintended consequences of reduced funding in long-term care and behavioral health in light of the Administration’s goal of transitioning people from costly institutional care to less costly and desired home- and community-based care,” Channing Tenenbaum said. “While a little more money was provided, much more is needed to implement the Governor’s vision. Otherwise, we will pay far more when seniors, people with disabilities, and those with mental illness and addiction end up in emergency rooms, psychiatric units, nursing homes, and jails down the road.”

Any new revenue identified during the budget process must be prioritized for health, human service, and early care & education programs, Hulbert concluded. “Ohioans have enjoyed tax cuts since 2005. The ‘rainy day’ is upon us,” she said. “If revenue projections increase, then those additional funds must be used to improve vital services for Ohio’s vulnerable children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities.”

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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.