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Mid-Biennium Review Introduces Proposals to Strengthen Ohio

COLUMBUS—On Tuesday, Governor Kasich released his plan for the "Mid-Biennium Review" (MBR). Advocates for Ohio's Future believes that Ohio can be a great place for all Ohioans to live and work, and that the MBR proposes several new initiatives which could help Ohioans achieve their potential and participate in the economy. The MBR, which is likely to be split up into a number of smaller bills, focuses on education, tax reform, workforce, and supporting Ohioans in need.

Advocates for Ohio's Future has identified several MBR proposals that will strengthen Ohio's families and communities, including:

- **Office of Human Services Innovation** - The MBR proposes an Office of Human Services Innovation within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. This new office will focus on aligning policies and services among several state agencies to help Ohioans living in poverty.
- **Expanded EITC** - The MBR also proposes to increase the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 5 percent to 15 percent of the federal credit.
- **Coordinated Workforce Training System** - The MBR aims to improve Ohio's complicated and fragmented workforce development system by transforming it to become more streamlined, responsive and efficient, making it easier for Ohioans to contribute to our workforce.
- **Support for Ohioans with Mental Illness and Addiction** - The bill proposes an initiative to increase access to crisis intervention and safe housing for Ohioans with mental illness and addiction. These temporary resources fill a gap for those Ohioans who are able to live at home and those transitioning out of the highest levels of care by providing them a safe place in times of crisis.
- **Preventing Substance Abuse** - The MBR prioritizes a \$6.5 million statewide investment in prevention initiatives aimed at educating children that are essential in order to stop substance abuse before it gets started. It also proposes \$26.9 million to support tobacco prevention and cessation programs.
- **Services for Individuals with Autism** - The MBR proposes creation of a free, voluntary online training and certification program for Ohioans interested in getting training on how to work with individuals with autism. This service will improve the quality and safety of supports available to families of children with autism.

Col Owens, Co-chair of Advocates for Ohio's Future, expressed support for the creation of an Office of Human Services Innovation, saying "Advocates for Ohio's Future looks forward to working with the Administration and legislature to improve the way our state delivers services to strengthen families and communities. This new office will focus on aligning policies and services among ODJFS, Board of Regents, the Office of Health Transformation, and the Office of Workforce Transformation to help Ohioans living in poverty."

Mark Davis, Co-chair of Advocates for Ohio's Future, highlighted the great need for workforce training in Ohio, including the coordinated workforce training system proposed in the MBR. Davis said, "By streamlining the workforce system, it will be easier for Ohioans to get the training they need to

participate in the workforce and advance their careers with new skills. However, more supports are needed for the human services direct care workforce in Ohio, which is the number one in-demand job in our state.”

“Advocates for Ohio's Future remains encouraged by initial statements from the Administration about strengthening Ohio’s economy by focusing on jobs and education,” said Will Petrik, State Director of Advocates for Ohio’s Future, “However, a number of key areas were left out of the MBR that could make Ohioans more competitive and increase opportunity for all Ohioans to participate in our economy.”

These priorities include:

- A strategy for a strong and sustainable human services direct care workforce (the number one in-demand job in the country).
- Additional support for adult protective services to protect older Ohioans from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Policies that prevent the abrupt loss of child care and other work supports as people climb out of poverty.
- A refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that helps keep working families out of poverty.
- Increased investment in food and nutrition assistance to ensure families have the security to seek opportunities.
- Increased investment in child welfare to improve outcomes for children and families. Ohio is 50th in the nation in state funding for child welfare.

The MBR (HB472) was introduced in the House Ways & Means Committee Wednesday afternoon. House Speaker William Batchelder (R-Medina) stated Wednesday that the MBR will be broken down into at least 11 bills.

As the MBR progresses, Advocates for Ohio’s Future will continue conversations with the administration and work with the legislature to ensure that the MBR strengthens families and communities in Ohio.