Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Goyal, and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Scott Britton, and I am coordinator of Advocates for Ohio’s Future, a statewide coalition of health, human service, and early care & education organizations. AOF works to maintain vital public services at a level that meets people’s basic needs and protects Ohio’s most vulnerable populations. You have no doubt heard from our co-chairs, Gayle Channing Tenenbaum and Margaret Hulbert, plus many of the 20 statewide associations that make up our steering committee and, perhaps even, some of the 195 organizations across the state that have endorsed our mission.

We all recognize that you as legislators face difficult decisions in the coming weeks.

Advocates for Ohio’s Future has worked for several budget cycles to help policy makers and the public better understand the role of government-funded health and human services. Our partners are focused on streamlining the delivery system, operating more efficiently, and providing greater return on investment to taxpayers. Our message of “improving on what’s working,” as described in the fact sheet attached to my testimony, is underlined by impressive outcomes in such areas as child welfare, home visiting, early care & education, and emergency food distribution. These programs are evidence-based, results-driven, and cost-effective. Only through ongoing adequate investment in these and other human service systems will we be able to continue building on past successes.

Who are the vulnerable Ohioans we continue to talk about? They are hard-working families who - due to circumstance - suffer from the downturn in the economy. They are people trying to hold things together despite stagnating wages and escalating gasoline and food costs. They are families working for low wages who rely on a patchwork quilt made up of subsidized preschool, health clinics, mental health and addiction services, affordable housing, emergency food, and so much more to remain productive employees. Human service consumers range from the poorest of the poor to formerly middle-class homeowners who, because of unemployment and
foreclosure, are now standing in line at the local food pantry. If we fail to invest in human services, then these families, and Ohio’s workforce as a whole, will be poorly positioned for when prosperity returns.

Advocates for Ohio’s Future is pleased to see that the budget, as introduced, proposes bold policy changes – many of which have long been sought by human service advocates. Now we rely on the leadership of this subcommittee, and on the legislature as a whole, to course-correct in order that these bold system reforms don’t fall short of their noble goals.

Advocates for Ohio’s Future urges you to reexamine proposed cuts to vital services and the overarching policy decision to offload so many costs to local government. Among the areas we recommend revisiting:

- Cuts to child welfare and other county human service agencies;
- Accelerated phaseout of the Tangible Personal Property Tax, which will decrease the value of many local human service levies;
- Reduction or elimination of support for families who adopt special-needs children or care for relatives;
- Offloading onto counties cuts to the Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps;
- Cuts to already spartan provider rates in developmental disabilities, child care, behavioral health, and aging; and
- Zeroing out of federally qualified health centers.

Our coalition welcomes the administration’s and the legislature’s willingness to “go where no budget has gone before”: by breaking down the silo approach to service delivery, by rebalancing long-term care, by integrating behavioral health care with physical health care. We applaud the Governor and his new Office of Health Transformation for maintaining Medicaid eligibility, preserving services like vision and dental, and focusing on prenatal care and low-birth-weight babies.

The policy recommendations in long-term care and behavioral health in particular represent a welcome change. The possibilities for short- and long-term savings there are substantial. The vision that drove these changes is one that has long been held by advocates. But in both cases the financial resources to back up these critical policy decisions are simply not there. The allocated dollars do not support the bold vision. If not implemented with the appropriate level of resources, these significant policy reforms will fall flat - and vulnerable people will fall through the cracks. These people deserve our investment; these sea-changes in policy deserve to be done right.

On behalf of Advocates for Ohio’s Future, I appreciate your time today and your service to all Ohioans, including those who are vulnerable and struggling because of the recession. Our coalition members stand ready to work with you to craft budget amendments that will remedy these concerns.
Health, human service, and early care & education programs form a critical safety net for Ohioans: supporting a healthy workforce and making it possible for working families to stay on their feet in tough times.

During these lean economic times, Ohio faces the challenge of serving the dramatically rising number of people in need at the same time that the state’s resources are decreasing. To meet this challenge, human service advocates have implemented more streamlined, efficient, and cost-effective methods of service delivery — but more remains to be done in some areas.

Advocates for Ohio’s Future believes that communities are stronger and more economically viable when people’s basic needs are met. As Ohioans move from vulnerability to self-sufficiency, they are then ready and able to make a contribution in return. Our state budget priorities over the next two years can improve on what is already working while meeting the basic needs of those struggling because of the current recession.

Here is a look at four key areas and the impact they are having as they provide high-quality services to Ohio’s most vulnerable populations.

### Children and Families

- 200,000 children at risk of maltreatment were served by child protection. **What’s working?** Investing in family-strengthening services has safely reduced the number of children in out-of-home care by 42% since 2002.

- 200 community agencies provide care and support services to Ohio’s children in foster care. **What’s working?** Ohio agencies are national leaders in employing new evidence-based practices to serve children with mental health or behavioral challenges.

- 271,000 children received early care & education through subsidized child care, public preschool, Help Me Grow, or early childhood special education and mental health services. **What’s working?** The quality of Ohio’s child care programs continues to improve. At-risk families receive home visits from professionals using research-based practices that maximize child and family outcomes.

### Seniors and People with Disabilities

- 300,000 seniors received home-delivered meals last year, and another 43,000 were diverted from costly and unnecessary nursing home care with comparable in-home services (PASSPORT) so that they remained independent. **What’s working?** Shifting just 2,500 people from costly nursing home care to PASSPORT saves more than $100 million each year.

- 80,000 individuals with developmental disabilities got help to improve the quality of their life. **What’s working?** Jobs are created for service providers, and federal funding is better leveraged to reduce the 27,000 people on a waiting list for waiver services.
• 5,000 people with disabilities are working and keeping their health coverage thanks to the Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities. **What’s working?** Employment and Medicaid keep people independent and able to “give back” to their community.

### The Safety Net: Food and Shelter

• 1.9 million Ohioans – almost half of them children and seniors – were served in a record-breaking three-month period in 2010 by emergency food providers. **What’s working?** Surplus or unmarketable foods are not wasted, farmers’ losses are reduced, and healthy, locally grown food goes directly to Ohioans in need.

• 2,700 homes and 1,600 rental units were constructed in 2009 by the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. **What’s working?** Safe, decent, affordable housing is made possible by leveraging federal and private resources, creating an estimated 10,000 jobs.

### Health Care

• 2 million Ohioans received health care services through Medicaid, including coverage for 1 in 3 births. The caseload has grown by 14.6% during the recession. **What’s working?** Infant ER visits are down 28% among Medicaid consumers, while infant hospital stays are down 54%. In addition, studies show that every state dollar invested in Medicaid yields $3.14 in economic activity. This multiplier effect is reflected in job growth in the health care industry, in related jobs in communities where these dollars are spent, and in economic activity that generates profits, investments, and overall growth.

• 342,000 people received assessments or services from Ohio’s community mental health system, including 112,000 children. **What’s working?** The state’s investment, when adequately funded, reduces jail/prison populations, nursing home populations, the number of children in the child welfare system, and suicide rates – while increasing workforce productivity.

• 103,000 people received assessments or services from Ohio’s alcohol and drug addiction system, including 10,000 adolescents. **What’s working?** The public investment in addiction services, when sufficient, helps people remain employed, care for their families, and live independently in the community.

If we fail to invest in basic needs and support Ohio’s workforce, our state will be poorly positioned for when prosperity returns. Advocates for Ohio’s Future supports vital public services that advance the long-term health of our families and communities. A budget solution should maintain these critical services at a level that meets people’s needs.

**To learn more and to help build strong communities and better lives through vital public services, visit:**

www.advocatesforohio.org

---

**Advocates for Ohio’s Future** is a statewide coalition that 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.

510 East Mound Street, Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43215
Coordinator: Scott Britton | 614-602-2463 | sbritton@advocatesforohio.org
Outreach Director: Will Petrik | 614-602-2464 | wpetrik@advocatesforohio.org
Fax 614-228-5150

---

**Look for individual fact sheets on:**

- Children and Families
- Seniors and People with Disabilities
- The Safety Net: Food and Shelter
- Health Care