Testimony on HB 153, The Biennial Budget

Before the House Finance Committee

April 14, 2011

By Scott Britton, Coordinator

Chairman Amstutz, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee:

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 198 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, 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 committee, 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](http://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.*

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Advocates for Ohio’s Future
Organizational Endorsements

Statewide Endorsing Organizations
1. AARP Ohio
2. CareSource
3. Center for Community Solutions
4. Children’s Defense Fund of Ohio
5. Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio
6. League of Women Voters of Ohio
7. Mental Health Advocacy Coalition
8. National Association of Social Workers-Ohio
9. National Multiple Sclerosis Society Ohio Chapters
10. National Youth Advocate Program
11. Ohio AIDS Coalition
12. Ohio Alliance of YMCAs
13. Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
14. Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies
15. Ohio Association of Community Health Centers
16. Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities
17. Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks
18. Ohio Citizen Advocates
19. Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services
20. Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage
21. Ohio Council of Behavioral Health & Family Service Providers
22. Ohio Domestic Violence Network
23. Ohio GroundWork Campaign
24. Ohio Olmstead Taskforce
25. Ohio Poverty Law Center
26. Ohio Provider Resource Association
27. Ohio Psychological Association
28. Ohio School Based Health Care Association
29. Ohio State Governmental Relations Corp.
30. Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Ohio
31. Policy Matters Ohio
32. Progress Ohio
33. Public Children Service Association of Ohio
34. The Arc of Ohio
35. Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio
36. Voices for Ohio’s Children

Local and Regional Endorsing Organizations (by city)
37. Akron: Alternative Community Services, Inc.
38. Akron: Tri-County Independent Living Center, Inc.
39. Ashland: Ashland County Council on Aging
40. Athens: Athens County Children Services
41. Athens: Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development
42. Athens: Havar, Inc.
43. Batavia: Clermont Community Services, Inc./Sauls Homeless Shelter
45. Berea: Berea Children’s Home
46. Blanchester: Blanchester Community Food Pantry
47. Byesville: Area Agency on Aging District 9
48. Cambridge: Community Treasures
49. Cambridge: Guernsey County Children Services
50. Cambridge: Guernsey County Senior Citizens Center
52. Canton: J.R. Coleman Family Service Corp
53. Canton: Sweet Serenity Homecare
54. Cincinnati: 4C for Children
55. Cincinnati: Anderson Ferry Food Pantry
56. Cincinnati: Beech Acres Parenting Center
57. Cincinnati: Caracole, Inc.
58. Cincinnati: Center for Independent Living Options, Inc.
59. Cincinnati: Cincinnati Arts and Technology Center
60. Cincinnati: Cincinnati Deacons
61. Cincinnati: Cincinnati Union Bethel
62. Cincinnati: Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency
63. Cincinnati: Contact Center
64. Cincinnati: Day Star Worship Center
65. Cincinnati: Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services
67. Cincinnati: Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
68. Cincinnati: Lighthouse Youth Services
69. Cincinnati: Mathis Foundation for Children
70. Cincinnati: Ohio Disability Action Coalition
71. Cincinnati: Planned Parenthood SW Ohio
72. Cincinnati: Peace Village
73. Cincinnati: Pressley Ridge
74. Cincinnati: Pro Seniors, Inc.
75. Cincinnati: Southeast Ecumenical Ministry Food Pantry
76. Cincinnati: St. George Food Pantry
77. Cincinnati: St. Joseph Orphanage
78. Cincinnati: St. Leo Food Pantry
79. Cincinnati: Talbert House
80. Cincinnati: The Children's Home of Cincinnati
81. Cincinnati: The People's Empowerment Coalition of Ohio
82. Cincinnati: The Center for Families & Children
83. Cincinnati: United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
84. Cincinnati: VRI
85. Cleveland: Advocates for Budget Legislation Equality
86. Cleveland: Beech Brook
87. Cleveland: Benjamin Rose Institute
88. Cleveland: Cleveland Eastside Ex-Offender Coalition
89. Cleveland: Cleveland Foodbank
90. Cleveland: Cleveland Housing Network
91. Cleveland: Cleveland Tenants Organization
92. Cleveland: Community Care Network
93. Cleveland: Graham Foundation for Children
94. Cleveland: Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
95. Cleveland: Regional Infant Hearing Program
96. Cleveland: Starting Point
97. Cleveland: The Arc of Greater Cleveland
98. Cleveland: The Center for Families & Children
99. Cleveland: United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
100. Cleveland Heights: Healthy Fathering Collaborative
101. Columbus: Action Ohio Coalition for Battered Women
102. Columbus: Axis Center
103. Columbus: Baker Nonprofit Management, LLC
104. Columbus: Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, AAA 6
105. Columbus: Channing & Associates
106. Columbus: Columbus AIDS Task Force
107. Columbus: Columbus Coalition Against Family Violence
108. Columbus: Columbus Women in Black
109. Columbus: Community Research Partners
110. Columbus: Council on Healthy Mothers & Babies
111. Columbus: Drug Policy Alliance Ohio
112. Columbus: Early Care and Learning (ECAL)
113. Columbus: Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio
114. Columbus: Homeless Families Foundation
115. Columbus: Hunger Network in Ohio
116. Columbus: Jewish Vocational Service
117. Columbus: Molina Healthcare of Ohio
118. Columbus: Progressive Peace Coalition
119. Columbus: Results
120. Columbus: St. John's Episcopal Church
121. Columbus: UMADAOP of Franklin County, Inc.
122. Columbus: United Way of Central Ohio
123. Columbus: Young Adult Community Development, Inc.
124. Coshocton: Coshocton Help Me Grow
125. Dayton: Artemis Center
126. Dayton: Children Have Options in Caring Environments (Choices)
127. Dayton: ComForcare Senior Services
128. Dayton: Comfort Keepers, Inc.
129. Dayton: Community Development Corp Resource Consortium, Inc.
130. Dayton: Wright State University Dept. of Social Work
132. Elyria: Easter Seals
133. Elyria: Lorain County Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, Inc.
134. Fairfield: Children’s Hospital Medical Center (Fairfield)
135. Fairfield: Shared Harvest Foodbank
136. Findlay: Open Arms Domestic Violence & Rape Crisis Services
137. Gahanna: OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11
138. Galloway: Westland Ecumenical Community Food Pantry
139. Georgetown: Helping Hands in Christian Services
140. Hamden: Agape Food Pantry
141. Hamilton: New Life Baptist Mission
142. Highland Hills: Achievement Centers for Children
143. Hilliard: Serving Our Neighbors (SON) Ministries
144. Hillboro: Carmel Church of God
145. Hillsboro: Highland County Community Action
146. Hillsboro: Samaritan Outreach Services
147. Ironton: Southern Ohio Behavioral Health
148. Jackson: RSVP of the Ohio Valley
149. Lima: Allen County Children Services
150. Lima: Area Agency on Aging 3, Inc.
151. Lima: West Ohio Food Bank
152. Lisbon: Lisbon First United Methodist Church
153. Logan: Hocking County Children Services
154. Lorain: Child Care Resource Center
155. Lorain: Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio
156. Lorain: United Way of Greater Lorain County
157. Mansfield: District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
158. Marion: Turning Point
159. Medina: Cornerstone Wellness, Inc.
162. Mt. Vernon: Knox County Head Start, Inc.
164. Newark: Pathways of Central Ohio
165. Ottawa: Putnam County Educational Service Center
166. Oxford: Oxford Community Choice Pantry
167. Painesville: Forbes House
168. Piketon: The Community Action Committee of Pike County
169. Portsmouth: Community Action Organization of Scioto County
170. Portsmouth: Shawnee Mental Health Center, Inc.
171. Portsmouth: The Counseling Center, Inc.
172. Ravenna: Family & Community Services, Inc.
173. Rio Grande: Area Agency on Aging District 7
174. Sciotoville: Potter's House Ministries
175. Sidney: Sidney-Shelby County YMCA
176. Smithville: The Village Network
177. Springfield: The City of Springfield, Ohio
178. St. Clairsville: Belmont County Dept of JFS
179. St. Louisville: House of New Hope
180. Stow: Hope Homes
181. Toledo: Family Service of Northwest Ohio
182. Toledo: Franciscan Shelters DBA Bethany House
183. Toledo: Lucas County Educational Service Center
184. Toledo: Lucas County Family and Children First Council
185. Toledo: Toledo Area Jobs with Justice Coalition
186. Toledo: United Way of Greater Toledo
187. Toledo: Zepf Center
188. Uniontown: Area Agency on Aging 10B, Inc.
189. Valley View: AHS / Ohio Mentor
190. Warren: ACOP Center
191. Wauseon: Pennington Orchards
192. Waverly: Appalachia New Day Ministries
193. Wellston: Jackson-Vinton Community Action, Inc.
194. West Liberty: Adriel, Inc.
195. Westerville: Concord Counseling Services
196. Worthington: Middle East Peace Foundation
197. Zanesville: Muskingum Counseling Center
198. Zanesville: Six County, Inc.