

TESTIMONY BEFORE
THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 12, 2013
Statehouse, Room 313

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

Presented by
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Chairwoman Gonzales and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Duana Patton and I am the Advocacy Chair for the Board of Directors of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (*o4a*) and Director of the Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc. which serves the north central Ohio region. With me today is Jacqi Bradley, the Director of the Area Agency on Aging 3, Inc., which serves the northwest region of the state.

Thank you, Chairwoman Gonzales, for holding a panel for members of the aging network last week to allow us to give the Subcommittee more information about what Area Agencies on Aging do for older Ohioans. Our Association represents the twelve regionally-based Area Agencies on Aging in Ohio that fund, plan, and coordinate services for, as well as advocate for, older adults and their families throughout Ohio. The Area Agencies on Aging administer and provide case management for the PASSPORT, Assisted Living, and Choices waiver programs and a variety of county levy programs. We are here today to emphasize that your support is needed to enable us to continue to provide cost-effective choices for older Ohioans who need long term care.

We know that the Governor and the Office of Health Transformation are committed to rebalancing long term care by prioritizing home and community based services. The proposed budget includes only a fractional increase in PASSPORT operational funding, however: less than ½ % in 2014 and less than 1% in 2015. Two years ago, funding was cut for PASSPORT operations by 10%, or \$3.6 million.

Screening and assessment activities are funded out of this PASSPORT operational fund. The Area Agencies on Aging answer 300,000 requests for information and referrals annually, and experienced screeners and assessors evaluate individual and family needs and link older adults to cost-effective in-home and community-based programs where they live. In part because of the cut to our operational funding, new enrollment has slowed to less than 1% since the last budget was passed. We have had to lay off staff, most notably screeners and assessors who are the front door to home and community based services. The small increases proposed in this budget are not nearly enough to restore the staffing necessary to meet the needs of Ohio's seniors and achieve the goals set forth by the Governor. It is important to note that these activities are not activities that will be performed inside the Integrated Care Delivery System (ICDS). Rather they are activities that will help make the ICDS successful, as well as provide access to long term services and supports in the 59 counties that are not part of the ICDS.

We also need more flexibility. The previous budget limited the flexibility of Area Agencies on Aging to manage our budgets – we were unable to shift funds to screening, assessment and provider relations. Because of this, money was left in one fund that could have been available for screening and assessment to help people remain in their homes. We need the flexibility in funding to be able to provide cost-effective, quality services.

The previous budget also cut PASSPORT providers by 3%. This results in fewer quality providers to serve Ohio's elderly population. We appreciate the administration's

recommendation to increase adult day services in PASSPORT and Assisted Living rates but believe other provider rates need to be restored to ensure that all seniors receive quality services without delay.

New enrollment has also been affected by care plan budget ceilings. This is also known as the per member per month, or PMPM, rate. The previous budget reduced the amount that Area Agencies on Aging can spend on an individual's care plan. Care plans averaged \$1147 in fiscal year 2012 and currently average \$1060 for fiscal year 2013. Care plans are authorized by care managers to ensure that Ohio's seniors get the right care at the right time in the right setting. Lower care plan ceilings cause a reduction in care, and have lowered the quality of life for many seniors and cut the lifeline for caregivers trying to keep their loved ones out of nursing homes.

The Area Agencies on Aging are active participants in the Integrated Care Delivery System (ICDS). The ICDS will offer an array of new home care services to seniors in the 29 pilot counties, which are predominately urban and suburban; however, we are concerned that seniors who live in rural communities will not be able to access these new life-enhancing services but will only have access to traditional PASSPORT services, which will create a disparity in how seniors are cared for inside and outside the ICDS project.

The Area Agencies on Aging are cost-effective and are well regarded in the community. It costs the state \$20,000 annually for in-home care, compared to \$60,000 for nursing facility care.

Since the inception of PASSPORT, the rate of people receiving nursing facility care compared to in-home care has decreased from more than 90% to 58%. We are cost-effective in large part because we provide the less costly home and community-based care options that most people prefer, we connect people to community resources that can delay enrollment in Medicaid, and we transition long-time nursing home residents back to the community.

What is needed:

- **Restore \$3.6 million to the PASSPORT “other operating” fund** that includes screeners, assessors and provider relations. These are activities that will not be moved over into the Integrated Care Delivery System (ICDS) but are vital for a system to move people needing long term services and supports to the right service, in the right setting at the right time.

- **Restore the 3% PASSPORT provider rate cuts from the current biennium budget.** Currently, adult day services are the only services that have an increase. The Executive budget proposed that assisted living providers have their 3% rate cut restored. Other PASSPORT rates such as personal care and home delivered meals are the lowest among Medicaid waivers. These rates should be restored to create parity among the waivers and to assure quality providers will bid to serve.

- **Assure that current care plan ceilings for PASSPORT do not limit the ability of the program to transition Ohioans from nursing homes.** The proposed care plan ceiling allows for some increased utilization and some additional services with a January 2014 PASSPORT waiver renewal. With a unified long term care budget, these numbers should not be used to limit

the ability of PASSPORT agencies to help individuals seeking home and community care as long as it is less costly than nursing home care.

- **Increase funding for Adult Protective Services.** County departments of job and family services are mandated by law to investigate and intervene in suspected cases of adult abuse, neglect or exploitation, but are severely underfunded. Thirty-nine counties lack a full time adult protective services worker. In HB 49, Attorney General Mike Dewine's Elder Abuse Commission is recommending a number of much needed changes to the law to strengthen the requirements for adult protective services and increase responsibilities; however, county budgets are strapped and there are no additional resources for them to carry out those responsibilities.

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging is a member organization of the statewide coalition Advocates for Ohio's Future and supports the advocacy agenda of other health and human services organizations.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the Area Agencies on Aging. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.