

Testimony For the House Finance Committee

Health and Human Services Subcommittee

April 14, 2011

Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Goyal and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. My name is Mary Butler. I work at the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and am a longtime member of many committees including the Ohio Olmstead Task Force (OOTF), Unified Long Term Care Systems (ULTCS) and the Interagency Council on Homelessness and Affordable Housing (ICHAH). I represent people with disabilities on all committees. I am a person with a significant disability. I use a power wheelchair for my mobility and grew up as a child with a disability. I am now 68 years old and work closely with the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). I have testified before this Committee since the 1990s. I am not in Columbus because I broke both legs and my hip in an accident and six weeks later had a pacemaker implanted because of an electrical blockage in my heart. I am healing.

This year we are more concerned about the cuts proposed to the agencies and programs which help to implement the services that achieve the goals named by the Office of Health Transformation. An example would be for people to have a choice to stay in their own home or apartment with services and supports instead of going into an institution (meaning nursing facility, ICF or Developmental Center).

Statistically, the increasingly large older population, with the assistance of PASSPORT, has been able to stay in their own residence with services and supports instead of being forced into a nursing facility. The nursing facility organizations stated that they return 150,000 people back to the community. MOST of those people are "short stay" residents only for rehabilitation for a few weeks. Scripps Gerontology has stated that once a person is institutionalized for a 6 month period, it is very hard to move them back into the community. Usually, at that point, they have no residence or belongings to go back to.

In this budget the Area Agencies on Aging are facing a 15% cut in funding and PASSPORT is facing a 3% cut. With these cuts, we are afraid that services and supports will NOT be available causing the number of older adults forced into institutions to increase. If this happens, the costs to support them in institutions will also increase. It has been proven to be more cost effect to keep people at their residence and give them the supports and services needed to keep them safe and having their needs met.

Most older adults do NOT need skilled nursing care. The Administration's desire to "rebalance" long-term care toward more community and home care and away from institutional care is desirable, but an increase in financing to PASSPORT and Area Agencies on Aging would be the "tools" needed to accomplish that goal. The numbers of people under 60 going into institutions has been increasing for many years because

there have NOT been the funds to utilize more Homecare waivers (like PASSPORT but for under 60 years of age). Centers for Independent Living (CILs) provide and find services and supports to keep people in their own residence and to move people out of institutions. But if there are no funds for waivers and no affordable housing, there is no way to keep people in the community.

When we are talking about people being 50% (in and out of institutions), ULTCS is also talking about funding being 50%/50%. We can have so many more people in the community (3 to 5 people in the community for the cost of one in an institution).

Another reason we become upset is the fact that there are 15,000 to 20,000 beds in facilities NOT being used on any day you might chose. There are also thousands of "banked" beds. This has been happening for the last many years. People from other states are brought to Ohio and moved into "empty beds" for Ohio residents to pay for until they either die or move back to their own state.

The Money Follows the Person (MFP) program helps individuals transition from living in a nursing home or other institution to living in the community with the services and supports they need. ODJFS changed the name in Ohio to HOME Choice and has been successful in moving over 600 people out of institutions. This is an enhanced federal program that Ohio applied for and received a large award. ODJFS has been working with some private nonprofit organizations along with Area Agencies on Aging and Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to implement this program.

There is approximately \$4.3 billion in federal funds that has been made available to help states establish and expand home- and community-based long-term services and supports for older adults and people with disabilities. Will this Administration apply and take advantage of this available funding???

The Community First Choice (CFC) Option in Healthcare Reform offers a six percent increase in federal Medicaid matching funds to provide community-based attendant services and supports to older adults and people with disabilities. Some state-level advocates for both groups see CFC as crucial in providing new federal matching funds for states considering drastic cuts to home- and community-based services. Ohio must take advantage of federal funds as they become available to help us achieve our cost-cutting goals. Thank you.

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