

Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Testimony from Sara Junk, Chair of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS)

March 15, 2017

Chair Mark Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and honorable members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, I am thankful and pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you this afternoon, specifically in regards to Adult Protective Services, the issues and the funding problems that plague the State, the workers and the elderly population in each and every county.

I am Sara Junk, Chair of the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS). I have been involved in OCAPS for over a decade and a hands-on worker and supervisor for Adult Protective Services (APS) in Pike County for even longer. Never in my years of being involved in APS work have the referrals been so high in number, the situations our elder face been so dangerous and intricate, and the need for more workers to help investigate and work to protect our elderly been so dire as now.

Right now, throughout Ohio, there are many counties that do not have even one worker dedicated to APS. Often, the responsibility for providing protective services for those who are 60 and older has been passed off to already strained Child Protective Services Workers. This is unfair to both the workers and to the elderly. While there are similarities between these two protective programs, there are significant differences. The State, the counties and the elderly are desperately in need of some help in the form of at least one full-time and trained APS worker for each and every county in order to effectively address the current needs levels.

Changes to the APS law in the last budget helped counties to build some infrastructure. However, these changes have put greater demand on these strained and often totally maxed out services such that counties must continually rely on local funding (for those counties that are fortunate enough to have such) in order to do the bare minimum for our seniors.

In my tenure as Social Services Supervisor over APS I have seen funding for my county be as low as less than \$2000 for an entire year (my county has over 4000 elderly residents) to the current allotment of \$30,000. This is a great improvement for which I am grateful. However, even at that rate, there is not enough to completely fund one full-time worker in my county: I have 3 workers who are spread thin over 7 different programs. Ohio now has required that there be infrastructure in place, which I enthusiastically applaud, but I am now asking that the investment into the program be sufficient so that the infrastructure is functional and sustainable.

One example is that each county establish interdisciplinary teams that bring together APS, law enforcement, the courts, and social services, at a minimum, to engage in case reviews and

identify gaps and resources. I-Teams are an incredibly useful tool to help counties with educating all agencies that are dealing with elder abuse or its effects, but it takes time to develop relationships and establish the commitment among agencies to attend meetings and share resources.

Ohio should be investing AT LEAST \$65,000 per county each year into providing protective service to our vulnerable elderly population. This amount would ensure quality core services are available in each and every county, regardless of availability (or unavailability) of local funds.

OCAPS supports an increase in APS funding of at least \$10 million per year, to include the \$65,000 base amount per county, but also additional funds that could be distributed by formula that can support staff, further outreach and education, and provide funds for supportive services to immediately stabilize victims of abuse and neglect.

OCAPS has been working hard to provide training and guidance to achieve continuity of services and best practices throughout the State. We are a large coalition and are proud to be the longest existing statewide coalition in Ohio. OCAPS and all its members strongly urge you to consider the thousands of elderly victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation as you develop laws, protocol and funding streams for the APS programs. Without increased state support, not just, but including reasonable funding, Ohio will continue to struggle to provide much-needed assistance to our elderly.

I thank you for your time and attention and am happy to entertain any questions, and I welcome any comments from the Subcommittee.

Sara J. Junk  
Chair, Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services



Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services Board

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