



May 18, 2011

To: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Shane Wilkin, Highland County Commissioner, on behalf of CCAO

Re: Counties' perspective on HHS issues in Am Sub HB 153

Chairman Widener, Vice-Chair Jones, and Ranking Member Skindell: thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Shane Wilkin. I am a Highland County Commissioner here today to present testimony on behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

While all levels of government are feeling the budget squeeze, county human service agencies may be feeling the brunt of it. With reduced state allocations, and counties taking a disproportionate cut to revenues that comprise their general funds, counties simply will not have the resources to invest in human services like they have in the past. The 43 children services agencies that have no children services levy rely on general fund money and TANF money transferred at the CDJFS level, and at least 33 counties invest additional GRF to help subsidize their local child support agencies. In addition, most county JFS agencies have not had the TANF money to invest – some at all – in Prevention, Retention and Contingency programs – the programs that are designed to help eligible individuals make it through crises that keep them at work and off the public assistance rolls.

CCAO actively supports the budget-neutral proposal developed by PCSAO, OCDA, JFSDA and CCAO to invest more money to county TANF allocations and child support enforcement. You will be hearing about this proposal in more detail from the experts with these other organizations. Welfare-to-work programming and child support enforcement are two investments that commissioners agree must be adequately funded.

Please allow me to share with you CCAO's other human services priorities in Am Sub HB 153:

1. We ask you to keep out language proposed by the Department of Health to expand the use of county assessments for the Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps program.

This is not a commentary on the value of the program. But when the state is reducing its own GRF contributions to the program, we view this as a direct cost shift; a cost shift proposed at a time when counties are taking disproportionate cuts to the local government fund and TPP and utility tax reimbursements, which you will hear more about tomorrow in general local government testimony.

During the HB 1 process last session, the Strickland Administration proposed and the House kept in this very same proposal, and the Senate removed it from the language and succeeded in



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keeping out from the enacted version of the bill. We thank you for that and request that you take a similar view of the proposal in this budget process.

2. We ask you to include clarifying amendments to two policy changes in the as-introduced version of the budget that impact county departments of job and family services.

The first makes clear in ORC Sec 5101.244 that ODJFS may negotiate repayment plans with county JFS departments, rather than require counties to enter into repayment plans. ODJFS has signed off on this amendment.

The second narrows the scope of language found in ORC Sec 5101.47 and 5111.012 permitting ODJFS to enter into agreements with other state agencies, local governments and political subdivisions to accept applications and determine eligibility for Medicaid applicants. We understand anecdotally from the Administration that this amendment is related to health care exchanges; however, we have not received a formal response from the Administration. We would like to narrow the scope of this language to tie it only to health care exchanges so that any broader changes to eligibility determinations will be deliberated publicly before the legislature, as such a major change in practice warrants. If county JFS departments lose Medicaid administration funding, they will need enough notice to plan accordingly, given the way the different programs they administer all link together in terms of staffing levels and funding streams.

3. CCAO would be concerned about any change to the status of county homes in regards to the franchise permit fee.

CCAO opposes the direct cost shift from the state to counties and county children service agencies in the Adoption Assistance line item (600528.) Currently, each county JFS or public children service agency (PCSA) holds a contract with each adoptive family whose adoptions qualified for Adoption Assistance. To qualify the family must adopt a child with special needs, and the monthly stipend is to be negotiated based on the needs of the child and circumstances of the family. Over the past three budgets, we have seen a continued cost shift of this obligation from the state to the county:

State Fiscal Year	State Contribution
08-09	\$300
10-11	\$250
12-13	Proposed: \$230

IV-E Adoption Assistance contracts are between the county and family, and federal guidelines prohibit the state and county from lowering the subsidy amount without the consent of the adoptive parent. The federal government does reimburse 63% of the state and counties' shares of these payments. Statewide, the average payment is \$465.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I hope that together we can ensure wise investments are made in human service programs, given our very limited resources. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.