**Via Zoom/ Conference Call:** Lisa Berkemeier (Graceworks); Denise Bauer (FairHoPe Hospice); Salli Bollin (MemoryLane Care Services); Judy Budi (Graceworks); Chris Green (Otterbein SeniorLife); Cory Parish (Shepherd of the Valley); Megan Kelley (National Church Residences); Kim King (Home Care Network); Rick Marshall (Genacross); Wendy Price-Kiser (Ohio Living Home Health & Hospice); Allison Salopeck – Chair (Jennings)

**Absent:** Megan Bradford (Episcopal Retirement Services); Renee Cummings (AccessCo); Jeff Lycan (Ohio’s Hospice); Mike Ray (Green Hills Community)

**Staff:** Kathryn Brod; Patrick Schwartz; Susan Wallace

Guest: Bridget McAuliffe (Barnes & Thornburg)

1. **Welcome, Call to Order & Meeting Summary Review**

Allison Salopeck (Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:02am. Allison welcomed new Advocacy Committee members Judy Budi and Salli Bolen to the Advocacy Committee.

The meeting summary of the December 3 Advocacy Committee was received without change. Salli provided a brief overview of the first meeting of the Adult Day Subcommittee, noting that not all adult day centers have reopened in Ohio but centers are helping one another and LeadingAge Ohio is assisting, as well. Vaccine distribution is uneven around the state, county to county. When considering LeadingAge Ohio’s priorities in the upcoming biennium budget, she noted that adult day reimbursement continues as a challenge, but LeadingAge Ohio will look to the experience in other state programs (DODD, child care, e.g.) to strengthen its proposal.

1. **Budget Priorities**Susan Wallace briefly reviewed the results of the early December budget priority survey completed by the Advocacy Committee members. She then presented the resulting proposed LeadingAge Ohio budget priorities:
	* NF quality incentive payment (QIP)and other rate-related proposals, including rebasing (note: this ranked as the highest priority across all responses).
	* Assisted living-Waiver (AL-W), which holds the most promise for offering options for affordable housing providers, is proposed with a protective (vs proactive) stance. This position will keep attention on AL-W and will hopefully keep the program’s reimbursement from losing ground.
	* Advancing workforce initiatives is a priority across all program areas; the initiatives will seek to enhance both recruitment as well as retention.
	* Maintaining attention on lagging Medicaid eligibility determination.
	* Improving PASSPORT reimbursement for adult day services & adult day transportation. Susan explained that adult day was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and PASSPORT adult day was woefully underfunded and had seen significant provider attrition in recent years. She noted there really isn’t another voice for adult day outside of LeadingAge Ohio.
	And, finally,
	* Creating a PPE cache received a good number of votes, but LeadingAge Ohio staff will need to research to learn how to take this general concept and create a proposed policy solution.

Susan noted that there are additional priorities on which LeadingAge Ohio would not lead but support: PACE, advancing low-income housing tax credit expansion, and supporting the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. Each of these issues has a dedicated group of stakeholders and received lower overall support in the survey, so they are efforts to support, not to lead on.

Committee members agreed that since providers received “less than what was promised in the last budget,” particularly on AL waiver and PASSPORT payment, LeadingAge Ohio should begin its budget advocacy with a more proactive stance, citing considerable revenue pressures (and these census levels are down around the state so, in fact, the state has certainly saved money as a result) as well as expense pressures from COVID. While increases for providers in this biennium budget may be unlikely, starting at a stronger place was encouraged. Educating policy makers on the way in which modest expenditures in one program area (e.g. AL-W) could result in significant savings in another (e.g. Nursing facility stays), as well as aligning our ‘asks’ with other associations to the greatest degree possible, were encouraged.

Committee members emphasized that THE most critical area on which to lead budget advocacy is workforce, particularly because COVID has exacerbated already existing challenges. They noted that: 1) progress was made in bringing increases for Direct Service Professionals in the last budget, so this may give a precedent for LeadingAge Ohio in this budget process, and 2) competition for workforce is increasing, coming not only from expected sources (other long-term care providers, acute care, etc.) but also increasingly from aggressive unlikely competition (e.g., travelling nurse opportunities).

Committee members noted that the development of a statewide PPE cache may fit better into a COVID-related proposal vs. the budget process, so they recommended that be trimmed from the list of prioriites.

The final proposed LeadingAge Ohio Biennium Budget Advocacy Agenda, incorporating the committee’s discussion, will be presented to the LeadingAge Ohio board for approval.

1. **Regulatory Initiatives**

Each committee member was asked to respond the following generative discussion question: *if you could change one, single regulation to make your work life easier, what would it be?*Committee members offered the following:

* Being consistency among surveyors in applying regulations, whether in nursing homes or in affordable housing. Surveyors should be able to cite and show a regulation that is not in compliance. There is discrepancy between surveyors as well as inconsistency from the same surveyor who might change their minds year to year.
* Offer survey relief, perhaps by receiving an extended survey window through a demonstration of quality, e.g.
* Align AL-W regulations – how could AL-W regulations be aligned with regulations for RCFs, to reduce regulatory hurdles.
* Adjust the required staffing ratio for adult day programs – the staffing requirement of 1 staff to 6 participants is a ratio required only in childcare infant programs. If adult day could be staffed with a more appropriate ratio, reimbursement pressures would be greatly relieved.
* Eliminate facility assessment (federal requirement). The facility assessment hasn’t reduced any survey requirement, so the assessment is largely a massive paperwork exercise.
* Educate ODH/ODA/ODM by ensuring they ‘dig in’ to understand particular issues (providers MUST send a claim within 24 hours of when service is provided; this requires 7 day/week claims processing when clearly the state isn’t processing 7 days a week but it also results in additional work to submit corrected claims).
* Challenge the current very restrictive COVID guidelines for adult day which are keeping many providers closed.
* Consider how to bring a consistency between Medicare Advantage plans in their willingness to pay for adult day.
1. **Legislative Update**Bridget McAuliffe noted that the 134th General Assembly includes a significant number of ‘freshmen’ legislators. The goal with these freshmen is to introduce LeadingAge Ohio and learn where their interests lie. Bridget noted that LeadingAge Ohio has used the past year to build a platform of trust and education, so the association should be in a good position for promoting its priorities, in particular, workforce solutions, particularly since COVID has placed a spotlight on workforce challenges in aging services. Once committee assignments are finalized (with chair of committees likely known by late January), communication of LeadingAge Ohio priorities will begin.

Bridget provided a high-level overview of the biennium budget process. The Governor’s budget will be released by Feb 4; Bridget will share its priorities as soon as they are known. After introduction in the House, its work will begin with the vote on the House sub-bill and omnibus amendment occurring after spring break. Typically moves to Senate last week of April. The budget bill must be signed July 1.
2. **Virtual Lobby Days**The virtual gathering opportunity provides flexibility to have visits on any day of the week vs. those days when legislators are in session. Susan will be reach out with a series of proposed dates, potentially scheduling virtual visits over severeal days in mid-March.
3. **Adjournment**

With no new business, the meeting adjourned at 11:35am.

***Next Committee Meeting: February 11, 2021 via Zoom.***