



## Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition urges legislature to include Healthy Aging Grants in state budget bill

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COLUMBUS — In an effort to address the growing needs and challenges faced by Ohio's aging population, the Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition (OAAC) is supporting the Ohio Department of Aging's request to include Healthy Aging Grants to Local Partners (AGECD14) in the state budget bill, Substitute House Bill 33. OAAC, a coalition of older adult and caregiver advocacy organizations spanning the aging services and older adult welfare sectors in all corners of the state, is urging the Ohio Senate to reinstate the Healthy Aging Grants in legislation.

OAAC members are pleased to join a broad group of nearly fifty business and advocacy organizations, including the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, County Commissioners Association of Ohio, Ohio Municipal League, and others, in signing letters of support (**see attached**) sent to the Ohio Senate President and Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives urging that the grants be reinstated in the state budget.

The \$40M in Healthy Aging Grant funding was proposed by Governor DeWine in the executive budget, maintained by the Ohio House of Representatives, and removed in the Ohio Senate substitute bill.

"The Healthy Aging Grants are a proactive step that will reduce dependence on the Medicaid program," said Susan Wallace, President/CEO of LeadingAge Ohio. "The grants achieve this by supporting preventative and evidence-based interventions for older Ohioans before they experience a health event that requires medical care. It builds on Ohio's unique strengths, bolstering our system of county levy programs to keep seniors in the communities they have called home."

If included in the final budget bill, Healthy Aging Grants will be distributed to all 88 Ohio counties to be used locally to help at-risk aging Ohioans stay in their homes and communities while preventing or



delaying the move to institutional care and reliance on Medicaid funding. The Healthy Aging Grants would utilize American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, of which the state still has hundreds of millions in reserve.

“We are concerned about the removal of the Healthy Aging Grants and urge the Ohio General Assembly to include the grants in the final version of the state budget bill,” said Larke Recchie, Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging. “Addressing the needs of older adults where they are at – in their homes and communities – should be a high priority for the state.”

“The Alzheimer’s Association would like to see the Healthy Aging Grant program added back to Ohio’s Budget,” said Trey Addison, Public Policy Director at the Alzheimer’s Association. “The program is essential for our aging population and helps establish a potential lifeline to Ohio’s most vulnerable citizens. An investment in Healthy Aging Grants will produce both a financial and societal return on investment.”

In addition to the Healthy Aging Grants, OAAC members have also voiced support for the waiver increases included by both the House and the Senate, as well as support for restoring funding through the Senior Community Services line item, reconsideration of affordable housing initiatives for older adults, increasing access to food assistance including SNAP and foodbank programs, and alignment of direct care worker wages across programs and populations.