

June 14, 2023

The Honorable Jason Stephens
Ohio House
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Speaker:

On behalf of the undersigned stakeholders, thank you for your leadership and strong commitment of funding Healthy Aging Grants. We respectfully ask the Ohio House to continue supporting this initiative and reinstate full funding of the Ohio Department of Aging's Healthy Aging Grants, as included in the Governor's and House passed version of the budget.

We believe the elimination of the proposed Healthy Aging Grants program is fiscally ill-advised. There are over 1.1 million Ohioans who are aged 60 and older at or below the federal poverty level. These are the individuals most at-risk for premature reliance on Medicaid for their long-term care without these interventions. The average annual Medicaid rate to provide nursing home services in 2021 was \$83,000 per person. Under the Healthy Aging Grant proposal, we would be able to provide support and services to delay or altogether prevent these people from relying on Medicaid at an annual cost of just \$18.18 per person. This is an exceptionally marginal investment to prevent our aging population from slipping through the cracks.

We simply cannot afford to do nothing. Currently, Ohio spends more than \$4 billion per year on nursing home care and home- and community-based services through the Medicaid program. The aged 80 and older population – the group most likely to need long-term services – will grow by an additional 25% between now and 2040. The evidence-based strategies made available through Healthy Aging are imperative if we hope to avoid increasing the Medicaid budget by another 25%, which would represent an increased cost of \$1 billion. Additionally, research has shown that community-based support services such as those provided through the Healthy Aging program (for example, preventing falls and delivering food security) can help Ohioans stay healthy, live longer, and remain active contributors in their communities.

With the growth of our aging population, we are already beginning to see the impact on our workforce. Families need help caring for their loved ones, who are often living under the same roof. Moreover, as Ohio's economic development opportunities grow, future employees will want to live in communities that support a high quality of life throughout their lifespan.

The Healthy Aging program is supported by a large and diverse coalition of aging and community-based organizations, business leaders, healthcare providers, not-for-profit organizations, and many more. We respectfully ask that you reinstate this provision in the budget.

Sincerely,



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Ohio Advisory Council for Aging



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