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July 26, 2013

Greg Moody, Director
Governor's Office of Health Transformation
77 South High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Director Moody:

As Chair of the Consortium Against Adult Abuse (C3A), and on behalf of consortium members, I write in support of a recently released document, *“Protecting Older Ohioans: Better Funding for Protective Services Would Improve Lives,”* by Wendy Patton, Senior Project Director for Policy Matters Ohio.

As a volunteer board operating under the auspices of the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging, C3A serves five counties in NE Ohio, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina. Our mission is to eradicate adult abuse in later life by educating other professionals and the community about adult abuse and advocating for protection for vulnerable adults. It is this mission that defines the activities of our twenty-eight member consortium

In Ohio, adults 60 and older make up nearly 17.4% of the state’s population compared to 12% in the United States as a whole. In her article, Ms. Patton reports that adult protective services (APS) cases have increased by almost 60% since 1989.

The C3A consortium commends the assembly and the governor for the slight increase in the FY 2014-15 state budget line item for APS. However, we believe that \$500,000 budgeted for investigatory activities into allegations of elder abuse for 88 counties are inadequate. While witnessing a significant increase in reports, Policy Matters Ohio notes a more than 80% decrease in funding. In addition, the article points out the negative impact which the federal sequester will have on counties who depend upon federal dollars to support their APS programs. It becomes incumbent on Ohio to respond to the needs of our most vulnerable citizens in an aggressive and proactive manner. We believe that an explicit goal to protect vulnerable elderly must become a legislative priority that is adequately funded. Funding is needed to correct inequities across Ohio in identification, assessment, and protection of victims of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Our failure to respond will cost not only the safety and dignity of elders but puts at risk Ohio’s commitment to lower long term care expenditures for older adults. Our inability to aggressively respond to self-neglect and caregiver neglect, abuse, and exploitation places elders in jeopardy of costly legal interventions, increased hospitalizations, depletion of resources, and



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nursing home placements, often at public expense through otherwise avoidable applications for Medicaid.

“Adult Protective Services: Opportunities for Savings Through Economies of Scale” by Lori Sommerfelt (Principle Author); Center for Community Solutions; April 2013 suggest APS funding proposals ranging from \$1.9 - \$5 million. However, the C3A is more aligned with the proposed amounts of \$11.5 - \$18.4 million cited by Policy Matters Ohio for a number of reasons which the Consortium will address in a follow-up letter. As our current budget debate so painfully underscores the needs of older populations, the fact is, Ohio must believe that maintaining and improving the safety of our most vulnerable citizens must be a priority.

Finally, we have a solution. It was first proposed, in 2011, by the Ohio Coalition for Adult Protective Services (OCAPS). Their proposal would require funeral directors to collect a \$50 fee each time they obtain a burial permit. Fees would be forward to the County Department of Job and Family Services (CDJFS). An Adult Protective Services Fund would be created in the state treasury for receipt of those fees, and would require that money in the fund be used to investigate abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults. We understand that implementation of the burial fee proposal would require legislative action, rules and guidance, but we must explore alternative funding sources in order to reach the goal of 11.5 million to \$18 million for APS. A recent OCAPS proposal to tap Medicaid Estate Recovery dollars (1/3 of the total) appears to be a more complex path to follow, but has the potential to be more lucrative.

Thank you for considering our request. We are available to answer any questions that you or your designee may have regarding the C3A consortium, and/or about our concerns regarding the lack of adequate APS funding. As chair, I can be reached at 216.443.7851, or 440.668.9553 or at kelliperk@cox.net.

Sincerely,

Kelli Perk, Chair of C3A, the Consortium Against Adult Abuse

Cc:
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