



## Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies

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### Legislative Priorities 132nd General Assembly

#### Unemployment Compensation

Last session, OACAA, along with other groups, asked the legislature not to pass an unemployment reform bill but rather form an interested party group that could work on this important issue this legislative session. We were pleased the 131st General Assembly did just that.

OACAA supports a revised unemployment compensation system that is fair for both employers and workers. Although we care about all workers, our focus is on those with the lowest wages. That said, as the committee of labor and management is formed to make unemployment compensation recommendations to the legislature, we recommend a person be added that represents the poor employed/frequent unemployed. It is important to the future of the unemployment system to have someone part of the committee who truly understands the struggles of this portion of Ohio's population and who understands the system.

#### Head Start/ Public Funded Child Care layering

Last year, the ODJFS ruled that Head Start and publicly funded child care could not be layered. We strongly disagree with the department on this ruling because of the important reasons/examples outlined below, because that goes against the wishes of the federal government for their programs, and we support legislative action that allows these two programs to be layered

The Ohio Head Start program was created in 1989 and began to grow under Governor Voinovich in 1991. He understood that Head Start was much more than child care. At one point, the combination of Federal Head Start and Ohio Head Start allowed us to serve 85% of the eligible children in Ohio. Ohio set the standard for the rest of the Nation.

Ohio was effective because Federal Head Start and its companion, Ohio Head Start, were not child care or day care programs. They are and were respectively, school readiness, antipoverty programs. This was also effective because, after much discussion with the Federal government, we were able to extend the day of the federal program by adding Ohio Head Start to it, using the federal facilities and equipment. It made the partnership of the programs effective and also efficient. Ohio Head Start dollars were stretched because we did not have to purchase goods and services which the Federal program already had available.



Eventually, under Governor Taft, Ohio Head Start was eliminated, the Early Learning Initiative was created, and many of the funds were shifted to child care agencies. The merger of Head Start and child care providers was the merger of two different programs with different purposes: one was focused on school readiness and antipoverty issues, the other on providing a safe place for the children of working parents. Both of these goals are important, but while the focus of Head Start includes the focus of federally funded, publicly funded child care, the opposite is not true as the focus of PFCC does not include antipoverty or school readiness issues.

The termination of layering does a real disservice to Ohio's children in poverty. Remember, publicly funded child care and Head Start are very different programs with very different purposes.

#### **LIHEAP- HWAP transfer**

OACAA supports Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy's efforts to transfer 25% from the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to the Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) as long as these dollars do not come from the HEAP administrative funds. This increase would be used to fund weatherization-related improvements to the residences of low income Ohioans. Increasing the percentage of federal LIHEAP funds spent on weatherization would increase the State's energy efficiency levels in a way that does not burden Ohio's ratepayers.

#### **Community Service Block Grant Funding Formula**

The 48 Community Action Agencies in Ohio are funded by Congress by the Community Services Block Grant. Currently, Ohio is funded at approximately \$27 million. The current funding formula distributes 91% of funding to local community action agencies. The remaining 9% is split between DSA for administrative costs and the Ohio Community Action Training Organization to perform training for board and staff members of local agencies as well as to provide technical assistance. OACAA supports keeping this funding formula as it is currently written in Ohio law.

#### **Payday Lending**

We believe we had won this battle with legislation in 2008, but the predatory lenders found ways around the laws. We have been asked by a coalition including Pew Charitable Trusts and some others to help on this. The rise in car title agencies and others who seek to take advantage of low-income people and rob them of their resources must be challenged. We hope the General Assembly will try again to close the doors on these operations.

#### **Housing Trust Fund**

OACAA supports COHHIO efforts to increase the Housing Trust Fund by \$15 million. Affordable housing is escaping the grasp of too many Ohioans. The State needs to do all it can to work for all Ohioans, and housing is a necessity which we all need. Affordable housing builds stronger, more stable communities.