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Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition Announces Policy Priorities for Upcoming State Budget to Support Older Adults

For Immediate Release

January 30, 2025

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COLUMBUS —The Ohio Aging Advocacy Coalition (OAAC), a coalition of organizations advocating for older adults and caregivers, today released its State Budget Blueprint outlining key priorities for enhancing Ohio’s home and community-based services (HCBS) system and strengthening the workforce that serves older Ohioans.

While the DeWine Administration and General Assembly made significant progress through historic investments in the last budget, the coalition highlights ongoing challenges for older adults and individuals with disabilities. These challenges include limited access to care, difficulties affording basic needs such as housing and nutrition, and barriers to community participation.

The coalition calls for increased investment in HCBS sustainability, preserving choice in long-term services and supports, supporting innovative care models, strengthening the HCBS workforce, safeguarding older adults’ health and well-being, and improving housing security.

“All Ohioans rely on these systems to support us as we age,” said Beth Kowalczyk, Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging. “Investing in programs like Ohio’s Senior Community Services Program is the key to healthy aging and helping older adults stay independent and connected to their communities. By providing essential services like transportation, meals, and personal care, this program not only prevents social isolation but also emphasizes prevention to reduce the need for more costly medical interventions.”

Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice shared, “Our goal is to build a stronger, more sustainable network of home- and community-based services for Ohio’s aging population. By advocating for adequate provider reimbursement rates, workforce development, affordable housing, and expanded access to essential services, we are

championing policies that empower older adults to age with dignity, safety, and independence in the communities they call home. These investments are crucial to addressing the challenges faced by both providers and the individuals they serve while creating a brighter future for all Ohioans.”

Maureen Fagans, President of the Ohio Association of Senior Centers (OASC) added, “Senior centers and community-based service providers know firsthand the strong desire of older Ohioans to live independently in their communities. For some, this is only possible by the availability of cost-effective local supports such as daily meals, transportation, home safety modifications, care coordination, and socialization programs. To meet the need in their communities’ local providers have mastered efficient service delivery in the home, but as the older population in Ohio continues to grow, the supports needed to meet their needs must grow too.”