



Advocates for Ohio's Future
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Governor John Kasich
Office of Governor John Kasich
77 S. High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor Kasich,

Congratulations on your re-election to a second term as Ohio's Governor. We at Advocates for Ohio's Future look forward to our continued work to make Ohio a great place for all Ohioans to live and work. As you enter your second term, we want to share some perspectives on how our state is doing and some areas we have identified as needing further attention.

Our communities thrive when people are safe, have good jobs and can afford the basics. When families can pay for the basics—like housing, child care, and food—that spending strengthens the economy and supports local business. When people can't afford the basics, the economy slows down. Unfortunately, over the last 10 years, family income in Ohio has declined while the cost of food, gas, housing, child care, health care and education have gone up.

While Ohio is in the midst of a modest economic recovery, the median family income in Ohio has declined 13%, from \$53,831 in 2003 to \$46,873 in 2013, according to the Center for Community Solutions. While Ohio's families are bringing in less money, the cost to support a family has gone up. In 2004, the "Basic Family Budget" for a one-parent, one-child family in Columbus was \$29,904, according to the Economic Policy Institute. By 2013, the cost of living for the same family was \$43,930 due to the increasing cost of food, housing, child care, healthcare and gas.

As we work together towards solutions to strengthen our communities and our economy, Ohio's budget priorities make a difference.

In order to make sure all Ohioans can participate in the economic recovery, Ohio needs to do more to make sure low-wage families and communities are stable and have the appropriate education and skills to be competitive in our new economy. We have an opportunity to prepare Ohioans to acquire and maintain quality jobs, so in the long run, they can support themselves and their families. It will take bold public investments and policy changes to strengthen Ohio's workforce and make all Ohioans competitive.

Human services play a key role in stabilizing individuals and families, so they can compete and thrive in the 21st century economy. While overall unemployment has fallen in the past few years, too many people can only find low wage or part-time positions. When people cannot invest in themselves and their families, the overall economic recovery does not benefit all Ohioans. Ohioans need person-centered work supports to bridge the gap between what they earn and what they need to provide their family with the basics.

We need more investment in our greatest asset – our people. Individuals must be able to meet their basic needs in order to succeed in training and education. Investing in human services—including health care, early education, food assistance, behavioral health, long-term services and supports, housing and child welfare—promotes and supports a productive workforce. We have an opportunity with the Office of Human Services

Innovation to reform child care eligibility to support working families transitioning out of poverty. Bold policy reform and investments are needed so Ohioans can climb the ladder up and out of poverty.

In the last state budget, Advocates for Ohio's Future was a leading organization in the effort to expand health care coverage to Ohioans through Medicaid expansion. As we prepare for the next state budget debate in 2015, we'll continue to work with our network across the state to advocate for healthy communities and maintaining Medicaid in Ohio.

We also see an opportunity to create thousands of new jobs that boost the economy in Ohio. The direct service workforce is expected to grow more than any other sector in the next five years, outpacing retail, teachers and fast food workers. Health care jobs are in high demand and they will continue to be a growth opportunity as our economy transforms over the next 20 years.

We are concerned about the shortages of direct service workers in Ohio as our state's population of seniors and people with disabilities grow. Shortages lead to inefficiencies and poor health outcomes. Ohio will continue to face a shortage of direct support professionals, independent providers, home health aides and personal care assistants unless Ohio significantly improves the compensation, training, and work conditions of these workers. When Ohioans have jobs that pay for the basics, they put more money back into the economy and strengthen our communities.

While we see jobs and the economy as a key to success for our state, we also believe it's important to protect children and seniors across Ohio. We support the recommendations of the Adult Protective Services (APS) Funding Workgroup and the ongoing efforts to ensure that children and seniors in all counties are safe from neglect, abuse and exploitation. There is an opportunity to strengthen both systems now to ensure that all Ohioans are safe by committing the energy and resources needed now and in the future.

Working together, we can strengthen our workforce and ensure that every community has jobs that boost the local economy and provide opportunity for all – full time jobs, jobs with benefits, and jobs that offer career advancement. It's time to reinvest in Ohio and strengthen our communities, because all Ohioans matter.

We are interested in hearing more about your budget goals and also appreciate the opportunity to share more details about our goals and budget recommendations on behalf of our coalition. Respectfully, we request a meeting in December or early January to discuss how we can work together toward these mutual goals. We look forward to working with you to strengthen Ohio's families, communities and economy.

Sincerely,



Mark Davis, Co-Chair



Col Owens, Co-Chair



Will Petrik, State Director

CC: Beth Hansen, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor

Greg Moody, Director, Office of Health Transformation

Ben Kanzeg, Deputy Director for Policy, Office of the Governor

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Bonnie K. Burman, Director, Ohio Department of Aging

John Martin, Director, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities

John McCarthy, Director, Ohio Department of Medicaid

Tracy Plouck, Director, Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services

Advocates for Ohio's Future is a statewide coalition of 475 organizations working to promote health and human service budget and policy solutions so that all Ohioans live better lives.