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Human Services Budget Cuts Hurt Hundreds of Thousands of Southwest Ohio Residents

Cincinnati (July 1, 2009) Abused children, laid-off parents and vulnerable senior citizens are just a few of the Southwest Ohio residents who will suffer under proposed state budget cuts to human services.

With Ohio facing one of the worst recessions in history, Ohio lawmakers are considering more than \$1 billion in cuts to the safety net that protects its most vulnerable residents. Proposals include slashing \$70 million in money used to protect abused children, \$80 million that helps the needy access employment and economic assistance and more than \$7 million to fund child support collection.

Money to protect the elderly, provide emergency assistance to the needy, help with adoptions and provide working moms with child care is also at risk. Many of the proposed cuts follow a two-year period of dramatic reductions to human services funding. And, they would result in a loss of matching funds from the federal government, doubling or tripling the impact.

“These cuts come at a time when the economy is sending record numbers through our doors – a third of the people we see have never been here before,” said Moira Weir, director of Hamilton County’s Department of Job and Family Services. “We are doing our best to help everyone who needs us, but we have reduced services and we have cut people to provide those services. With more than 55,000 people coming in our door every month, we need every penny we can to help our citizens out of troubled times and into a better place in life.”

With the unemployment rate above 10 percent, many have turned to their local Job and Family Services Department for assistance. In Hamilton, Butler and Clermont counties alone, 155,000 residents now receive food stamps to help with monthly eating expenses, while more than 200,000 rely on Medicaid to help with health insurance.

Those in need are likely to find long lines and reduced services at their local JFS office. In Hamilton County alone, allocations for JFS operating expenses dropped \$30 million over the past two years, resulting in the loss of more than 350 workers. Proposed cuts would reduce allocations another \$30 million by 2011. JFS organizations throughout the

state have grappled with similar situations – more than 2,500 jobs have been lost statewide.

It will get worse if the cuts under consideration are adopted. The Public Children's Services Association of Ohio projects that, if current proposals are adopted and 70 percent of the money used for child protection is cut, 1,500 of the state's 8,000 child protection workers could be laid off from their jobs. Each job loss – whether a children's services worker, a child support collector or a public assistance technician -- impacts the public's ability to receive help in a timely manner.

“It is difficult to tell someone who has waited until they've reached the very end of their rope to turn to the government for help with putting food on their table that they will have to wait another 30 days because we have a stack of applications a mile high and fewer workers to process them,” said Bruce Jewett, director of Butler County's Job and Family Services Department. “Many of them will go to bed hungry that night and for many nights to come.”

It is not just the poor who suffer. Child support is a program that touches more children than any program outside of public education. In Hamilton, Butler and Clermont counties, there are approximately 135,000 active child support cases. That's hundreds of thousands of children who might not get the money they need for food, rent, school clothes and other necessities.

“Food, shelter, basic needs – these should be government's priorities at a time like this,” said Tim McCartney, director of Clermont County's Department of Job and Family Services. “We would ask that, as we fight through the worst economic crisis we have endured in our lifetime, we focus on providing the funding to help people meet their most basic needs and ensure, to the extent possible, the protection of those who cannot protect themselves.”





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