

**Public Comment from the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
On the Auditor of State's Performance Audit of the Ohio Department of Aging**  
*June 24, 2025*

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a) appreciates the role of performance audits in improving public services. These reviews promote transparency, identify areas for improvement, and help strengthen systems that serve Ohioans. We appreciate Auditor of State Faber's thoughtful and detailed examination of the Ohio Department of Aging (ODA), and we view the recommendations as an opportunity to improve communication, operations, and outcomes across the state's aging network.

As the statewide association representing Ohio's network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), we are committed to building a responsive and coordinated system that adapts to the growing needs of older Ohioans. The audit highlights challenges we know well: increased demand, stagnant funding, and the need for more cohesive systems to support our collective mission. These findings underscore the importance of sustained investment and strong collaboration between the state and its partners.

Ohio's aging services network operates under a decentralized model in which the Department oversees and monitors programs, while the local AAAs are responsible for the day-to-day coordination of services in their communities. AAAs are independent agencies, uniquely positioned to tailor programs to regional needs and reflect the diversity of older Ohioans across the state. As the audit notes, the AAAs are not only the most prominent stakeholder in the aging network but also administered more than 95 percent of the funding distributed by the Department over the past 14 years.

This decentralized structure—by design—offers accountability at the local level and flexibility to meet community needs. However, it depends on strong, consistent communication from the state to function effectively. We support the audit's recommendations to improve communication processes, clarify roles, and enhance data infrastructure to strengthen the effectiveness of this model.

We strongly support the call for improved data quality and consistent reporting. Accurate, accessible data is essential to understanding service gaps, planning for future needs, and ensuring accountability to both older adults and taxpayers. From tracking service delivery and outcomes to understanding waitlists and regional disparities, better data will support more informed decision-making and equitable resource allocation across the state.

We also support the audit's recommendations to improve oversight and transparency in the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. While not all AAAs serve in that role, many do, and all

are united in their advocacy for older adults—including those in institutional settings. Improved data practices, timely reporting, and shared performance goals are critical to strengthening this essential program.

We encourage the Department to thoughtfully consider the audit's findings and recommendations as it plans for the future. The report presents meaningful opportunities to strengthen operations, communication, and collaboration across the aging network. As long-standing partners in serving older Ohioans, the AAAs stand ready to work with the Department to advance shared goals and ensure that every older adult in Ohio has access to the services and support they deserve.