



## **STRONGER COUNTIES. STRONGER OHIO.**

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Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

### **Bolster Ohio's Child Welfare System**

#### **CCAO Operating Budget Requests:**

- Maintain increased investment in the state child protection allocation (SCPA), an additional \$25 million in SFY 26 and \$30 million in SFY 27 for a total of \$180 million and \$185 million respectively to ensure that children who are in foster care can stay in safe settings that meet their needs.
- Maintain one-time funding of \$19.5 million in SFY 26 and \$9.5 million in SFY 27 to establish regional child wellness campuses that would provide short-term treatment and care for multi-system youth at risk of custody relinquishment or in PCSA custody and unable to access timely, appropriate placements.
- Establish a process for the Department of Children and Youth to increase cost transparency and predictability in county agency budgeting for placement costs.

#### **Talking Points (Personalize for your county when applicable):**

- Highlight your county's experience with the costs associated with placement and the issues impacting the children in your system, including children with complex mental health issues and histories of violence. Be as specific as appropriate when sharing stories.
- Room and board costs for children in custody are escalating and unsustainable, largely driven by a shortage of appropriate placement settings that can address children's complex needs.
- The number of kids in custody and in paid placement settings decreased by 9% between 2020 and 2024 (from 11,890 kids in 2020 to 10,782 in 2024). In that same time period, total placement costs after reimbursement increased by 68% (from \$231 million to \$389 million).
- Foster home average per diems rose from \$63.25 in 2020 to \$81.67 in 2024, an increase of 29%. Children's residential centers average per diems rose from \$269 in 2020 to \$414 in 2024, an increase of 54%. Group home average per diems rose from \$233 in 2020 to \$382 in 2024, an increase of 64%.
- To ensure children in foster care are placed in safe settings that meet their needs, counties need state-level policies and resources to address the rising costs of placements and the limited options for children with complex needs.

