

Hearing on Home Weatherization Assistance Program and the ARRA  
May 6, 2009  
Testimony of Philip E. Cole  
Executive Director  
Ohio Association of  
Community Action Agencies

My name is Phil Cole and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies. I am here today to testify in support of Ohio's Home Weatherization Assistance Program ARRA Application.

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies represents the interests of Ohio's fifty-two community action agencies. We serve the needs of low-income people in all of Ohio's eighty-eight counties. We administer over \$750,000,000 of resources aimed at alleviating the problems of poverty in Ohio's Communities. We employ over 6,000 people. And we provide service to nearly 800,000 Ohioans.

Forty-three of Ohio's fifty-seven HWAP providers are Community Action Agencies. We are quite proud of our record as providers of weatherization and I am quite pleased to discuss it with you today.

There has been greater interest than usual in HWAP over the last few months. I can only assume that is because of the growth of the program in the ARRA. Community Action Agencies are quite prepared for this growth. As you know, Ohio's providers, both community action agencies and others, achieve our production goals each year. We are prepared to do the same during the time of the ARRA funding.

We are prepared to employ, and have begun employing, more employees for the program. As you know, HWAP work is difficult and technical. It must meet strong and exacting standards. This is a challenge for which we are ready. The Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development has expanded the Ohio Weatherization Training Center to include four new hubs across the State, placing Ohio's providers in position to train our new employees and new contractors with whom we may partner. Training is important and I think that any impartial examiner will agree that Ohio's training is as good as or better than any other.

I have heard it claimed by another organization that they have weatherized more homes in a single year than the entire HWAP provider network. Claims like this

demonstrate a misunderstanding of what is Weatherization. It is quite possible that other organizations may touch more homes in a year than HWAP providers, but home repairs and other items are quite different from Whole Home Weatherization. To do a job correctly, takes many hours. We take pride in correct performance. We will not substitute speed for quality, and we will not do a partial job. Tax dollars are meant to be used by those who will perform correctly and completely.

While we are always open to collaboration with potential local partners, any potential partner must be able to demonstrate a willingness to satisfy those standards I mentioned earlier. It is disturbing when other organizations appear to confuse the HWAP with other more simple operations. We encourage the State to maintain and enforce the standards required by the Federal Government and we look forward to the opportunity to fully execute this program under the Plan you have designed.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify. Ohio's Community Action Network supports this application.

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