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Anti-Poverty Task Force issues recommendations

“Poverty should be the enemy of us all.”

In accepting the recommendations of his Anti-Poverty Task Force, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland ended the work of the group and moved its task to the larger community statewide.

The task force was established in May 2008 by executive order and its members included Phil Cole, executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies (OACAA), representing the state’s poverty fighting network.

“This Task Force looked at the real issues of poverty,” Cole said, thanking the governor as the recommendations were announced April 28. “The timing could not have been better; it was the right thing to do.”

OACAA and its members assisted in hosting more than 20 Conversations on Reducing Poverty throughout the state. Those discussions led to the recommendations Strickland accepted. More than 2,000 people of all backgrounds attended the events, Cole said.

“These conversations were a success,” he added. “Many communities asked that the conversations be held again. They were great examples of the purest forms of democracy.”

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Add 1-1-1

The Task Force's recommendations focus first on aggressive and sustained efforts to create job opportunities for low income Ohioans. The Task Force recommends that wage goals be based in part on the Self-Sufficiency Standard report commissioned by OACAA in 2008. The standard measures how much income an individual or family of a certain composition, in a given place, needs to adequately meet basic needs, without public or private assistance.

The longer term recommendations also call for an ongoing commitment to "safety net" programs that provide a foundation of stability. Many of these programs are operated by Community Action Agencies around the state. The Task Force calls for strengthening of the programs and ensuring that they are accessible to those who need them.

"Economic hardship and instability are not new to many Ohio families," Cole said. "Over the last year, our network has seen many new faces needing assistance – people who have never had to ask for help before. There has also been a significant increase in requests from the families we serve regularly."

"We are fortunate to have a strong network of Community Action Agencies poised to help implement these recommendations and help people change their lives," he added.

The Task Force's recommendations establish a comprehensive and holistic four-pronged, multi-year approach for expanding opportunity and reducing poverty in Ohio:

1. Create Opportunities for Economic Advancement: Encourage, enable and support sustainable movement up the economic ladder for Ohioans living in poverty, as well as those who are at risk of falling into poverty, through training and employment opportunities.

2. Establish Foundational Stability: Provide for the basic needs of Ohioans living in poverty, as well as those who are at risk of falling into poverty, in order to prevent additional hardships, stabilize their current economic situation and prepare them to take advantage of opportunities that lead to economic advancement.

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Add 2-2-2

3. Invest in Children and Young Adults: Further invest in children and young adults in an effort to reverse the tide of generational poverty.

4. Ensure Transparency, Accountability and Leadership: Ensure progress is accountable, investments are uniformly measured, information is made public, and ongoing interagency leadership is effective.

For a complete list of the Anti-Poverty Task Force's strategic recommendations, visit www.oacaa.org.

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