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**FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CALL FOR CHANGES TO
PROPOSED STATE BUDGET**

Elected officials from Franklin County met today to discuss the upcoming state biennial budget and proposals in it that would cut hundreds of millions of dollars from county budgets all over the state. The two main focuses of the meeting, which was called by Board of Commissioners President, John O'Grady and to which all county-wide elected officials were invited, were the loss of revenue from Medicaid Managed Care sales tax and the reduction of state reimbursement for legal counsel for indigent defendants. Together, the two cuts would amount to about a \$23 million annual decrease in Franklin County's budget, roughly equivalent to the combined yearly expenditures of the county Probate Court, Coroner, Auditor, Recorder, Treasurer, Municipal Court, Engineer, Court of Appeals, and Municipal Court Clerk. Statewide, the cuts are expected to top \$200 million per year.

In 2016, federal regulators ended a tax structure that allowed the state to collect sales tax on services provided by Medicaid Managed Care Organizations, which included more than \$200 million per year that went to counties and independent transit authorities. The state budget bill being debated in the statehouse now would address the losses to the state budget, but not those to counties or transit authorities. The Franklin County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution in March calling on the state to provide an equitable and permanent solution for counties and transit authorities

"The state is making itself whole from these losses," said Board of Commissioners President John O'Grady. "But leaving counties with a giant hole in their budgets. There are proposals pending in the legislature that would address this problem, and we're calling on our Central Ohio delegation, and all state legislators to look at those closely to find a way to continue funding the vital services that counties provide."

Franklin County stands to lose about \$21 million per year in the foregone sales tax revenues, about seven percent of all sales tax dollars, and COTA will lose millions more. The cut to indigent defense reimbursement amounts to about \$2 million more in lost funding.

"Behind every budget cut like this are real people who won't be getting the services they need to live," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "These are our neighbors and, often, the services we provide them are at the behest of state government. To further cut county budgets so that our most vulnerable residents are left without a functioning safety net, justice services, or economic development is just unconscionable."

States have a constitutional obligation to provide legal defense to indigent criminal defendants, and Ohio originally opted to require counties to provide this service and committed to reimburse each county for 50% of the cost. Provisions of recent state budgets have reduced this reimbursement percentage, and

the current proposed budget would reduce it further, amounting to a loss of about \$2 million per year for Franklin County.

“Having recently served as a state representative, I’ve seen this issue from both sides,” said Commissioner Kevin Boyce. “I know that the state counts on counties to provide some of these important services but that they just can’t happen without monetary support from the state. Communities all over Ohio are going to be without the funds they need, which means that Ohioans will suffer. In Franklin County, we’re committed to seeing that the state lives up to its obligations so that we can continue to provide the best services possible to our residents.”

At today’s meeting, representatives from the County Commissioners Association of Ohio provided a legislative update on the status of the current proposed budget and the proposed fixes to the pending budget cuts. The commissioners and other elected officials agreed to work with the legislature, and will be calling on local legislators to see to it that the budget holes are filled before the budget gets to the governor’s desk at the end of June.

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