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Health, Human Services & Aging Committee Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

Date: March 19, 2025

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Summary

- Cuyahoga County Council is set to vote on agreements related to the collection of cash child-support payments.
- Continued support of wrap-around services from CHN Housing Partners is planned.
- New council members (Mark Casselberry, Robert Schleper, Jr., Michael Houser, Sr.) seem to be engaged and learning, based on the questions they asked.

Follow-Up Questions

- How can other grassroots organizations that may not have a previous relationship with the county become eligible for county funding, especially with the reduced federal help?

Notes

The meeting was called to order at 1:06 p.m. by Chair Yvonne Conwell. All committee members were in attendance at roll call, establishing a [quorum](#):

Yvonne Conwell, chair

Martin Sweeney, vice chair

Mark Casselberry

Robert Schleper, Jr.

Michael Houser, Sr.

There was no public comment, and the minutes from the March 5 meeting were adopted and approved.

The committee considered Resolution 2025-0100, which would authorize a \$10,000 grant for the [Louise C. Stokes Scholar House](#). Laura Boustani, VP of External Affairs at [CHN Housing Partners](#), and Nina Holzer, CHN's director of financial mobility, presented.

Council Member Merideth Turner wanted to make a donation using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money allocated for her district, specifically for the Scholar House's Care Corner, according to Boustani.

The Scholar House project was completed in 2023. The building was named after [Louis Stokes](#)' mother, Louise Stokes, Holzer said. Located on Community College Avenue between Downtown and Cleveland's Central neighborhood, Scholar House aims to eliminate barriers to families with members seeking secondary education. The building is fully leased with 40 families, according to Holzer.

The Care Corner is a free, donation-based resource supplying residents with personal hygiene and household product necessities. According to Holzer, the ARPA money would let CHN purchase first aid kits, toiletries, diapers, baby bottles, feminine hygiene products, trash bags, paper towels and more. Holzer thanked Cuyahoga County employees from the [Divine Nine historically Black Greek organizations](#) for their donations, which assisted in replenishing Care Corner items.

Committee questions:

Schleper asked about academic support measures surrounding Cleveland State University (CSU) and Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C).

Holzer: The building has space for one-on-one academic counseling. These academic partners come to the building for enrichment programs, and there are continued talks on how to use the building's community space for classes and workshops.

Schleper asked about families transitioning out of the Scholar House.

Holzer: Residents stay the length of time needed to achieve their degree with an additional six months after graduation, with CHN working closely with them during those six months about a path forward.

Conwell asked if CHN assists with making sure residents are in classes that will apply to the job market.

Holzer: Setting workforce development goals is part of that six-month planning period, as is exploring their school's career services resources.

Conwell asked where the children attend school? Conwell also asked about transportation.

Holzer: Most of the children are under 5 years old, and there is a “solid group” that attends Step Forward’s onsite Early Learning Center, and there’s another Head Start site next door for older children. CHN does not have a transportation arrangement for the 6- to 10-year-olds who attend CMSD schools. Most of the moms who live there have cars, and part of their day is transporting kids to school.

Conwell asked how the program is funded.

Boustani: The operation is supported by rent. Residents get housing vouchers/rent subsidies from Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority. Services are funded in part by donations and grants, as well.

Conwell asked how Care Corner is monitored.

Holzer: It is in a program manager’s office and is open when the program manager or family coach is on site.

Conwell asked how the residents are elected to reside at Scholar House.

Holzer: Applications were looked at on a first come, first served basis. There are income qualifications and applicants must be enrolled full-time in a post-secondary education program, maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA and have a child under 18.

This resolution will need three readings before consideration of passage, Conwell said, noting that all APRA expenses require that.

Motion passed to move the resolution to the full council for a second reading on March 25.

Discussion only

David Merriman, director of Health and Human Services (HHS), said the department would soon ask council to approve a [resolution](#) on first reading regarding child support payments as related to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. *[Editor’s note: Council is required by the county charter to read legislation at three separate full council meetings before holding a vote, but it can vote to suspend that rule and vote on passage after just one or two readings.]*

Council annually reviews these agreements, Merimman said. Tiffany Dobbins-Brazelton, director of Cuyahoga Jobs and Family Services, and Marcos Cortes, with HHSA, also presented.

The agreements are mandated by the Ohio Revised Code, Cortes said, who added that they are for the collection of cash child-support payments. The agreements allow the county to recover up to 66% reimbursement of the expenses incurred but must be approved, signed and dated by March 31 to allow the county to request reimbursement for the first quarter of 2025.

Richard Weiler from the county's child support office explained the delay for bringing these agreements to council for consideration. The Juvenile Court decided to increase the number of magistrates that will hear child-support and custody issues to increase efficiency, causing a change in the type of contract service.

Schleper asked if each entity listed in the resolution is responsible for enforcement.

Weiler: The courts involved are part of the enforcement. The other entities handle different steps within the process.

Conwell asked if the agreements cover administrative costs.

Dobbins-Brazelton: Yes.

Houser asked if there are any metrics to evaluate the providers.

Dobbins-Brazelton: The county has to provide the services for IV-D cases, which require a signed application. The county does not have a full-proof monitoring system to ensure a case they're getting reimbursed for is IV-D, but it is working on creating tools and a system to do so.

Houser also asked what they are doing to alleviate barriers around paying child support.

Dobbins-Brazelton: Have to work within IV-D requirements to find partners and grants that they can get reimbursed for. Working on trying to connect people with better services and want punitive measures to be a last resort.

No miscellaneous business.

[Editor's note: The resolution is on council's March 25 agenda for consideration on first reading].

Adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

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