



**Senate Health, Human Services and Aging Committee
Douglas E. Lumpkin, Director,
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Confirmation Hearing
May 18, 2010**

Chairman Coughlin, Vice Chairwoman Gillmor, Ranking Minority Member Morano and distinguished members of the committee. I am Douglas Lumpkin, and I am director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, under these somewhat unusual circumstances.

I'd like to start out by telling you a little bit about myself. Then I will discuss some of the experiences I've had at ODJFS over the last year and will conclude by stating my priorities and goals for the department.

First, a little background about me. Those of you who have been in Columbus for a while may remember hearing the name "Clarence Lumpkin." I am proud to say that Clarence Lumpkin is my father. To understand me – what drives me, and where I get my inspiration – it comes from this man, who always put family and community first.

My father grew up in the South but moved to the Linden neighborhood in Columbus after World War II. Over the years, he became a very outspoken community activist. He helped residents by persuading the city to separate storm and sanitation sewers to stop basement flooding. He worked on a Community Development Block Grant task force, led anti-drug marches, and made Linden the first inner-city community with lights on every residential street. Over the years, he became known as the "Mayor of Linden," an unofficial title that he proudly wears to this day.

From both my mother and father I developed a very deep and ingrained sense of responsibility for making a difference in our community, and for helping improve people's lives.

I would argue that you won't find a person of greater character or principle than my father. I acknowledge that I cannot fill his shoes. I can, however, walk a parallel path, and throughout my career, I believe I have done so, and I have tried to make a difference in a different way.

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Because of his support and encouragement, I earned a degree from Wittenberg University. I went on to serve with Attorney General Celebreeze, Attorney General Fisher and Attorney General Montgomery, finishing in 2005 as chief operating officer and then chief information officer for then-Auditor Montgomery.

I left that position in 2005 to become director of the Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services, the largest agency in the county, with a budget of more than \$145 million and approximately 700 employees. During my tenure, I led a reorganization of the department. I increased training for employees, set up a call center, and brought case management automation to the agency. I also allowed social workers to specialize, to speed services.

My experience at the county level has informed decisions I have made at the state, I believe for the better. I have seen what works, and what doesn't work. I am sensitive to how state decisions play out at the local level. I have always believed in making a difference. This position offers different opportunities to make a difference.

As you may remember, I joined ODJFS in January 2009, during a rather tumultuous time. The national recession was just gaining steam, and unemployment claims were starting to trend upward, quite dramatically. Our call centers were beginning to be overwhelmed.

Some might say this was a trial by fire. I am happy to report, however, that we suffered some but survived the fire. In fact, we emerged from it better off – with system and process improvements in place to better accommodate claims load increases, and better serve our customers.

For example, we extended call center hours. We implemented virtual hold technology, giving customers the option to hold or request a call back. From October 2009 through January 2010, we estimate that virtual hold saved more than 21 million minutes – or more than 41 years – of hold time, with a total dollar savings of nearly \$400,000.

We transitioned 20 former Child Support staff in The Plains to doing unemployment call and processing center work instead. We temporarily transitioned 55 Office of Unemployment Compensation employees for call and processing center work, as well. We also staffed a temporary call center in the Lazarus Building with 69 intermittent customer service representatives, many of whom were about to exhaust their own unemployment compensation benefits, prior to being hired.

Of course, unemployment compensation is just one of our programs. As you know, ODJFS also develops and supervises the state's public assistance, child protection, child support, Medicaid and workforce development programs.

At ODJFS, we basically do three things every day:

- 1) We develop and implement policies and procedures.
- 2) We distribute money – to counties, to individuals and to organizations.
- 3) We maintain the information systems that allow us to develop and implement policies and procedures and distribute money.

We do these things in order to help Ohio's families find solutions to their temporary challenges. At this time of great need and limited resources, I have identified three priorities that I believe will be fundamental to our ability to help families find those solutions. They are:

- 1) Retooling the child welfare system.
- 2) Supporting our infrastructure.
- 3) Innovating service delivery.

By retooling the child welfare system, I mean supporting system improvements – such as Alternative Response, a collaboration with the Supreme Court of Ohio that allows caseworkers more flexibility in deciding how to respond to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Ohio recently completed an 18-month Alternative Response pilot project, and early indications are that our 10 pilot counties experienced the same good results seen in many other states. We are hoping to expand this model statewide.

Another child welfare system improvement I strongly support is the Child in Need of Protective Services, or CHIPS, legislation. As you know, the General Assembly will be considering CHIPS soon. It would dramatically alter Ohio's approach to child welfare by changing the primary question from "Did someone harm this child?" to "Does this child require intervention?" It would clarify vague language in current statute, and close existing gaps. We at ODJFS believe it would improve the health, safety and well-being of Ohio's children.

Regarding my second priority, in order to provide an effective, respectful level of customer service to Ohioans, we must support our infrastructure. By this, I mean our systems – such as SACWIS, our new Statewide Automated Child Welfare System, and CCIDS, the Child Care Information Data System, which just went live in March.

I also am committed to moving forward with the implementation of MITS – the Medicaid Information Technology System – and ERIC – the Employer Resource Information Center. MITS will replace an antiquated claims processing system that is more than 20 years old and never designed for its current capacity. ERIC is a new unemployment tax system that will replace a 33-year-old system experiencing a level of activity it also was never designed for: the serving of more than 230,000 employers and the processing of more than \$1 billion in tax revenues each year. People often underestimate the value of infrastructure. Yet, without it you often cannot implement policy, or properly distribute money to counties, to individuals and to organizations.

Finally, when I say that one of my priorities is more innovative service delivery, I mean that I am open to the possibility of doing things differently, when doing so would be in the best interest of the state, counties and the families we serve.

We already have instituted many service delivery improvements for our cash and food assistance programs. For example, in April we transitioned from 6- to 12-month certification periods for most cash and food assistance groups. We also are developing a Self-Service Web Application, which will allow people to apply for cash or food assistance benefits or Medicaid online, at their local public libraries or wherever they can access an Internet connection.

As you may know, we've had a collaboration with the Ohio Benefit Bank for some time now, whereby volunteers help people apply for our programs and transmit their information directly into our CRIS-E database. The Self-Service Web Application will take this one step further, to make our programs even more accessible to those who need them.

For unemployed Ohioans, we implemented new rules preventing people's unemployment benefits from being wiped out by lump sum distributions from their pension, retirement plan, 401K or annuity accounts. We also let unemployment claimants know about a new federal program allowing them to receive special consideration for educational financial aid, such as Pell grants.

For Medicaid, we have begun implementing two strategies that will make it easier for children to get and maintain coverage: 12 months' Continuous Eligibility and Presumptive Eligibility. Continuous Eligibility allows children to maintain their coverage for an entire year, even if their family's income changes. Presumptive Eligibility is when children are allowed to be enrolled in Medicaid temporarily while their applications are being processed.

We also are having conversations about additional strategies: Presumptive Eligibility for pregnant women and Express Lane Eligibility for children. Express Lane Eligibility is when eligibility data gathered by similar programs – such as the free and reduced school lunch program – are used to enroll children and renew their eligibility because, as you know, people don't become unpoor between programs.

So those are my top priorities. There's no question that 2009 was a difficult year, in many respects. However, I have been extremely pleased with what our staff has been able to accomplish, even in these difficult times. For example, during the quarter ending in September 2009 Ohio ranked fourth in the nation in the timely issuance of first unemployment compensation benefit payments. Also during 2009, we posted our lowest Food Assistance payment error rate ever.

No question, we have tough challenges ahead. To name just a few: our quest to bring up ERIC and MITS; our need to meet work participation rates and to implement strategies so that we can avoid future federal penalties; the rolling out of the SACWIS financial modules to the 74 remaining counties; the need to find new strategies to manage the reduction in WIA funding due to the federal formula; and the revamping of the disability determination process. Plus, whatever else you give me.

Early on, when meeting with staff, I espoused a very simple motto: "If we say we will do A, we will do A."

I believe agency staff have begun to embrace this motto, and my colleagues at the counties understand it, too, when working with us. I hope we can continue to build upon it so Ohioans will understand it, as well. When it comes to ODJFS, as an agency, we are true to our word, and responsive to those we serve. I believe this generates a level of respect and confidence that has nothing to do with the size of our agency, but with follow-through and action. It defines everything we do at ODJFS, each and every day.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I will now be happy to answer any questions.