



**Senate Health, Human Services and Aging Committee**  
**Michael B. Colbert, Director,**  
**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**  
**Confirmation Hearing**  
**2:30 p.m., Wednesday, February 23, 2011**  
**South Hearing Room, Ohio Statehouse**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Stewart, Ranking Minority Member Brown and distinguished members of the committee, I am Michael Colbert, director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. With me is our executive staff, which includes Michael McCreight, assistant director of Health and Human Services; Sonnetta Sturkey, chief operation officer; and Bruce Madson, assistant director of Employment Services. Sara Hall Phillips, deputy director for the Office of Unemployment Compensation, is here today in Bruce's stead. I would also like to introduce Melissa Bacon, our new deputy director of Legislative Affairs. Melissa will be our point of contact if you have questions or concerns about our programs. You've already heard from John McCarthy, our Medicaid director. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

JFS is the agency responsible for safety-net services for Ohioans. This includes Unemployment Compensation, Workforce Development, Food Assistance, Cash Assistance, Foster Care, Adoption, Child Care and Child Support. We're also the "single state agency" charged with administering Ohio's Medicaid program.

A large percentage of the people in Ohio, at some point in their lives, will cross paths with our agency. Our customers include:

- An estimated 1.2 million children involved in the Child Support program
- More than 300,000 Ohioans receiving unemployment compensation
- More than 1.8 million Ohioans receiving Food Assistance
- And about 2.1 million Ohioans enrolled in Medicaid

We serve those customers with an annual budget of \$21.6 billion—including both federal and state dollars—and fewer than 3,700 employees.

Let me stop for just a minute to paint a picture of those we help. Adults who qualify for many of our programs earn less than \$12,000 a year. Adults in some programs earn less than \$7,000 a year. So when I say we help Ohio's most vulnerable citizens, I mean the poorest of the poor: parents struggling to feed their families while they search for jobs or enroll in training programs, children who in some cases have been abused and neglected and desperately need safe homes, frail and elderly Ohioans who can no longer work and need help with basic nutritional and health care needs.

Everything we do focuses on our mission, which is: To improve the well-being of Ohio's workforce and families by promoting their economic self-sufficiency, and by ensuring their safety. For the upcoming biennium, we have three goals aimed at achieving that mission:

- Individuals and businesses will realize their greatest degree of economic success, with a workforce equipped with the skills employers need,
- Children will grow up in a safe and healthy environment,
- JFS will strengthen families through the delivery of integrated solutions to temporary challenges – which simply means that we will use all the tools at our disposal, across multiple systems, to help people solve their temporary problems.

One of our most pressing priorities is incumbent worker and on-the-job training. Incumbent worker training is training provided to currently employed workers in order to help keep them employed, avert layoffs and improve their employability. On-the-job training is training that gives workers the chance to “earn and learn” – in other words, that allows them to receive training while they are working, and that guarantees them a job when the training ends.

Other priorities include IT initiatives that will improve service delivery and cost-effectiveness, and child welfare initiatives. We also look forward to working with the Office of Health Transformation to improve health outcomes and provide the best value to taxpayers.

Before I go, I'd like to give you just a little background about me personally. Prior to being appointed interim director and then director of JFS, I was the agency's chief financial officer for almost three years. Before that, I was senior audit manager for the Ohio Auditor of State, where I worked for 15 years, under State Auditors Jim Petro, Betty Montgomery and Mary Taylor. While at the Auditor of State, I conducted special audits of state and local government entities, nonprofits, information systems and health care billing providers. In fact, I audited many of the programs that I'm in charge of now.

I'm a U.S. Army veteran, and I have a bachelor's degree in finance and accounting from Central State University in Wilberforce. I grew up in Dayton and Xenia, and still live in Xenia today. I come from a family of hard-working small business owners. My father was a funeral home owner and director, and my wife is a nurse practitioner who owns her own practice.

Because of my auditing background – and my three years leading the JFS fiscal office – I believe I am in an ideal position to lead the agency forward, especially in these tough economic times. Based on this experience, I know the agency, and I know what we need to do to deliver services to Ohioans. Their well-being – their health, their safety and their ability to find jobs – is our priority. Our job is to serve them as effectively and efficiently as possible, and I know what it takes to do that.

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