

Governor Calls for Elimination of PASSPORT Waiting List by Reallocating Existing Funds

Columbus, Ohio - Ohio Governor Ted Strickland today called for the elimination of the waiting list for the PASSPORT program for this fiscal year, as well as the Assisted Living and PACE programs at the Ohio Department of Aging, by the end of March.

Currently, 592 people who need and are eligible for home and community-based services are on a waiting list for these three services.

"We should do our best to support older Ohioans who prefer to live independently in their own homes, but need assistance along the way," Strickland said. "We have identified existing funds that will allow us to assist all seniors eligible for home and community-based care without a wait."

The Department of Aging implemented waiting lists for these services in order to balance their budget for fiscal years 2010-2011. Waiting lists generally cause the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to incur increased costs from nursing home use and Home First placements.

Strickland has called for the transfer of resources from ODJFS to the Department of Aging to pay for the elimination of the PASSPORT, Assisted Living and PACE program waiting lists. \$490,924 in funds can be transferred immediately to pay for Home First placements. A transfer of \$4,809,076 to eliminate the waiting list is subject to Controlling Board approval. These transfers will eliminate the waiting lists through the end of the current fiscal year (June 30). The Administration plans to seek additional transfers in fiscal year 2011 to ensure no waiting lists for the remainder of the biennium. "These resources are from existing funds that otherwise would have been spent on more expensive care for a smaller group of people," Strickland said. "This change shifts and maximizes limited resources in a way that benefits the most Ohioans." "I'd like to thank Sen. John Carey, Sen. Dale Miller, Rep. Peggy Lehner, and Rep. Debbie Newcomb for their commitment to this matter and their advocacy for home and community-based care for older Ohioans," Strickland said.

PASSPORT (Pre-Admission Screening System Providing Options and Resources Today) is a Medicaid waiver program run through the Ohio Department of Aging that provides medical care to qualifying seniors in home and community settings.

Gov. Ted Strickland plans to redirect millions of dollars set aside for Ohio nursing homes to eliminate waits for seniors who want long-term care in their own home.

The governor says beefing up in-home care is a better use of resources than more costly nursing home care for a smaller group of people.

Close to 600 people are now on a waiting list to receive long-term medical care at home. To serve them, the governor has ordered the immediate transfer of about \$500,000 from a nursing home stabilization fund and will ask a state panel to OK the redirection of another \$4.8 million to home care programs.

The Strickland administration says the money can be moved because the state's Medicaid program is spending less than expected on nursing home care.
