



**Testimony of
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Treuhaft Chair for Health Planning
The Center for Community Solutions
House Shared Services and Government Efficiency Subcommittee
January 21, 2014**

Good afternoon Chairman Maag, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Slesnick, and members of the committee, I am Susan Ackerman, Treuhaft Chair for Health Planning with the Center for Community Solutions, a non-profit research and advocacy organization with offices in Cleveland and Columbus. The organization celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2013. Our mission is to propose non-partisan policy solutions to improve health, social, and economic conditions for Ohioans.

I am here today to testify in favor of House Bills 322, 323, and 324. These bills offer a series of steps to make public data more readily available and more comparable.

A couple of years ago I worked on what has been one of my all-time favorite projects – an analysis of county human services funding in Cuyahoga County. This analysis provided an assessment of the likely impact of policy and funding changes at the federal, state, and local levels on the demand for Cuyahoga County-funded human services and compared revenue and spending levels on human services across all funding sources in Ohio's six major urban counties. Comparing county spending and revenue sounds simple, right? Not so much – good data was available, but it wasn't easily comparable. Much time was spent sorting out the apples from the oranges, retyping data, and reading the fine print in all of the CAFR reports.

Good Data Leads to Improved Decision-Making

Good data leads to better decision making and spurs innovative thinking, enabling policymakers to better target limited public resources. Currently, much data is siloed within various programs and agencies, making it more difficult to fully understand the impact of government programs on the lives of the people they are designed to help. Better availability of data and more substantive analysis will lead to improved effectiveness and efficiency. In order to be most effective, access to current data as well as broad and continued participation is critical for both local and state programs. State programs need to make improvements too.

Geographic comparisons are of great interest to policymakers. Analyzing what other states were doing was a common request when I worked as an analyst in both the executive and legislative budget offices. Making it easier to compare data across geographies is a great improvement that will enable local policymakers to use data as decision tool and will provide additional accountability and transparency for taxpayers.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.