



Advocates for Ohio's Future
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Last Minute Budget Amendment Not Healthy for Ohio

Statement from Tara Britton and Steve Wagner, Co-Chairs of Advocates for Ohio's Future:

On behalf of nearly 500 health and human service organizations across the state, we strongly oppose the last minute inclusion of the Healthy Ohio Program in the state budget bill. The proposal shifts costs to parents and families who are already struggling, reduces access and coverage of necessary care and increases administrative burdens and costs to the state.

Instituting premiums for those with Medicaid makes it harder for poor families to access needed health care and maintain coverage. Though there are incentives for individuals to consistently pay their premiums, results of these incentives in Medicaid programs is varied and evaluations of similar programs have shown no benefit. Furthermore, effectiveness of such incentives has been questioned, based on high costs of infrastructure start-up, marketing and administration.

Under the program, those who cannot afford to pay premiums would be moved to a new "basic" Medicaid program under diminished covered care. The "basic" program would not be required to cover benefits like prescriptions, addiction screening, ambulances, oxygen, mental health counseling, wheelchairs and other services. Without access to these services through Medicaid, people struggling with chronic illnesses, including mental health issues and addiction, would not be able to afford the care and medications they need in order to provide food and shelter for their families, go to school or succeed in the workplace.

In addition to reducing access to care and increasing health disparities in our state, the implementation of Healthy Ohio Program would cause an excessive administrative burden on the Medicaid program in applying for the federal waiver, and increase administrative costs at the state and local level. Considering the state has been unsuccessful at instituting these changes in the past, we believe the state's efforts are better spent improving the building on the successes of the current Medicaid program.

Ohio's Medicaid program as it exists today – without barriers for coverage – conclusively demonstrates that boosting access to health care, including addiction and mental health services, has been critical to the health, financial stability and employment of hundreds of thousands of Ohioans. This Healthy Ohio plan would not be limited to adults – it impacts youth ages 18-20 who may still be dependent or in school, foster youth up to age 26; and low-income parents and caretaker relatives.

We urge the Ohio House of Representatives to continue to recognize not only the improved health and stability outcomes from Medicaid expansion, but the financial outcomes and savings the program affords our state. The Healthy Ohio Program pulls the rug out from under the number of positive health and human service investments included in the bill by putting the health and stability of over a million Ohioans at risk.

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Advocates for Ohio's Future is a nonpartisan coalition of nearly 500 local and statewide organizations that promotes health and human service budget and policy solutions so all Ohioans live better lives.