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Advocates for Ohio's Future Disappointed in CMS Approval of 1115 Medicaid Waiver; Looks to DeWine Administration for Thoughtful Implementation

Columbus - Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF) expressed disappointment in CMS's decision to approve Ohio's Work Requirements and Community Engagement Waiver for the Medicaid expansion population, submitted by the Kasich Administration as required by lawmakers in the last state budget. AOF and thousands of other groups and individuals testified in opposition to the waiver and offered warnings of the damage its enactment would cause to critically necessary access to health care without barriers for low-income Ohioans.

AOF strongly supports Ohio's Medicaid expansion. Good health is critical for maintaining a job, earning an education, parenting, and participating in community life. Health must come first on the path to self-sufficiency.

"By jeopardizing access to care for thousands of Ohioans through Medicaid expansion, this waiver undermines people's health and creates more barriers toward AOF's mission for stronger, healthier people and communities. We've already seen tens of thousands of people in Arkansas lose Medicaid coverage because they could not navigate the challenging paperwork and red tape," said AOF Co-Chair Steve Wagner. "When individuals lose access to health care through Medicaid, they lose family and financial stability and the ability to address other, basic needs."

"The waiver increases the complication of using Medicaid for patients, health care providers, and county agencies which in turn increases the expense of implementation," said Tara Britton, coalition Co-chair. "It is up to the DeWine Administration to develop rules to align and implement the waiver. We urge the Administration to involve stakeholders and consumers in defining inclusive and clear exemption criteria. The administration must also assure there is sufficient education and training programs and work experience opportunities across the state to support individuals affected by these changes."

Even if administered with great care, the Medicaid waiver will reduce access to health care, damage health outcomes for Medicaid enrollees, discriminate on the basis of race and increase the complexity and expense of administering the Medicaid program. AOF encourages a thorough and inclusive administrative rulemaking process and increased support for counties to implement this new system.