



Advocates for Ohio's Future

510 East Mound Street, Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43215
614-602-2463 | 614-602-2464 | Fax 614-228-5150
www.advocatesforohio.org

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CONTACT

Gayle Channing Tenenbaum, 614-226-3116
Mark Davis, 513-218-5991

HOUSE BUDGET LEAVES DOOR OPEN TO MAKE OHIO HEALTHIER

COLUMBUS – The Ohio House today passed its version state budget bill (HB59). The provision to extend health coverage to 275,000 Ohioans that was included in the Governor's budget was left out in the House version, but an amendment on the floor was passed that allows the Kasich Administration the ability to pursue alternative options to extend healthcare coverage to 275,000 Ohioans.

Advocates for Ohio's Future Co-Chair Gayle Channing Tenenbaum expressed support for the 11th hour amendment in the house, "We are appreciative of the unanimous, bipartisan support for today's amendment that focuses on extending healthcare coverage and continued reform of Medicaid." She continued, "We are pleased that the Ohio House kept the door open to the idea of extending coverage to over 275,000 Ohioans. We are hopeful that we can work together with the House, the Senate and the Administration to extend health coverage to 60,500 Ohioans with addiction, 55,000 Ohioans with mental health needs, and 26,000 Ohio veterans, and thousands of working families across the state."

Mark Davis, Co-Chair of Advocates for Ohio's Future, remarked, "This state budget is a historic opportunity to strengthen communities and the economy in Ohio. We are pleased the Ohio House is keeping their options open on extending health coverage, because not extending health care to low-wage workers would have a costly impact on Ohio's small businesses." Davis added, "Companies are looking for healthy workers and extending health coverage to working Ohioans would increase the health status of Ohioans and make our state more competitive."

Advocates for Ohio's Future was also pleased with other parts of the budget passed by the House of Representatives. The House version added \$6 million (state and federal) for PASSPORT, \$100 million for mental health and drug addiction, restored cuts to the Federally Qualified Health Centers, and added an additional \$4 million for food banks over the biennium.

"We thank the Ohio House for the recognition that increasing access to food stabilizes struggling families, supports Ohio workers, and stimulates Ohio's economy. We also appreciate the support to improve access to home and community-based services for seniors, people with disabilities and people who struggle with mental health issues and/or drug addiction, but these investments are a drop in the bucket compared to the investment we could make in families and communities by accepting federal dollars to extend health coverage," said Tenenbaum.

Davis concluded, "This issue isn't going away. We will continue to stand up for healthcare for low-wage Ohioans. We are urging the Ohio Senate to keep the door open on the idea of extending coverage to 275,000 Ohioans. We look forward to working with the Senate to strengthen families and communities in this budget."

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Advocates for Ohio's Future is a statewide coalition of over 400 local and statewide organizations that works to strengthen families and communities by maintaining vital public services, including health, human services, and early care & education.