

Testimony of Amy Hurst
Mother of Fox Yocum, Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsey
HB49 as Introduced by the Governor
House Finance - Health and Human Services Subcommittee
March 23, 2017

Chairman Romanchuk, members of the HHS Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the CMH - Children with Medical Handicaps, also known as the "BCMh" program.

My name is Amy Hurst, and I live in Columbus, Ohio. I am married with two children. My older child, Fox Yocum, is 15 years old and has Cerebral Palsy. Fox's father and I were never married and for much of his life I raised him as a single mother, with his father and I sharing custody for part of each week. Fox was diagnosed with CP soon after he was born. Although thankfully his condition is not severe, he did not walk until age 3, and at age 7 walking was becoming very painful and difficult for him due to severe spasticity, or muscle tightness, in his legs. Surgery, leg casts, and aggressive physical therapy restored some of his ability to get around, although he now uses crutches most of the time and sometimes a wheelchair. He will need regular physical therapy for the rest of his life, which will hopefully keep him mobile and able to get around without being confined to a wheelchair.

On behalf of Fox, my family, and the 40,000 children served by the CMH Program in the Department of Health I ask that you Save the CMH Program. This program must continue to provide a safety-net for disabled and chronically ill children like Fox. The changes proposed in the Governor's Budget dramatically reduce services and eligibility for this critical program, services that we depend on for Fox's care.

My child's care through the CP Clinic, a specialized treatment center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, relieves access and care burdens from our family through hospital based service coordination and public health nurses. The Clinic provides us with a unified team of physical and occupational therapists, social workers, child psychologists, and exceptional world-class physicians who all work together not only to help us manage Fox's medical treatments but also how to navigate life as a person with a disability. In the past year they have provided us with assistance with everything from working with Fox's school, to entering the workforce as a disabled teen, to drive's ed for a specially modified car. This service coordination is made possible through CMH and it is crucial for us. It has made all the difference in what is often an exhausting, scary and isolating journey, and we are grateful this program exists.

Fox is enrolled in Medicaid, and has been throughout his life. Thankfully Medicaid has covered a lifetime of physical, occupational and speech therapy, botox injections, surgery, leg braces, mobility devices like Fox's crutches and wheelchair, mental health services, and basic health care like antibiotics, dental visits and eyeglasses. However, a few years ago we were moved to a managed care plan, Molina Medicaid, which does not cover the full year of weekly physical therapy sessions Fox needs. CMH fills the gap, paying for the additional sessions which make up nearly half a year of therapy he would not be getting otherwise. This therapy is the only thing that stands between Fox's mobility and Fox being confined to a wheelchair as an adult -- it is absolutely critical that he continue to receive a full year of physical therapy sessions. The Ohio Department of Health CMH coordinators and administrators understand Fox's specialized needs. We need the safety net of CMH to keep Fox healthy, and so do all the other families on the program. Please, preserve this program, which has been so successful for nearly a century.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, thank you for protecting Ohio's children by allowing the CMH program to continue providing services to middle- and low-income families. Thank you for the opportunity to share my family's story and I would be happy to answer any questions.