

TESTIMONY

House Bill 49: Main Operating Budget

Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

March 23, 2017

Emilie Helman

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes, my name is Emilie Helman and I appreciate having this opportunity to share with you how the Medicaid expansion has made a life changing difference to me. I ask that you support the continuation of the Medicaid expansion.

At the age of twelve, I began to have mental health issues, and began receiving treatment that year. For many years, I went undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, and it wasn't until the age of 19 that a therapist finally properly diagnosed me with Acute Generalized Anxiety disorder, Panic Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, and Discalcula, a math learning disability. I had suffered depression for years, and, though I possess exemplary intellectual capacities, I found it difficult to succeed in school.

In 2016, when I was about to turn 26, my mother and I both worried about how my medical needs would be covered since I would no longer be eligible to remain on my mother's policy. I was no longer living at home, and worked only twenty to twenty five hours per week in a job that paid eight dollars fifty cents an hour. My employer did not offer health benefits to any of its employees, part time or full time. To manage my disorders, I take Paxil, which costs 314 per month without insurance; Klonopin, which costs 264 per month; and Lamictil, which costs 581 per month for a total of 1,159 dollars per month. These medications make it possible for me to complete day to day tasks that others take for granted. I can drive a vehicle, perform my work duties, and complete errands and household tasks, all of which become a significant challenge if I am not able to take medication. Without these medications, I cannot function effectively in the workplace. I was also worried that I would lose my doctor, with whom I had forged an important relationship. A disruption such as this would have been difficult, and I was concerned about how I would be able to continue my medications.

When I learned I would be eligible for health coverage under the Medicaid expansion, I was greatly relieved. I found the sign up process simple and quick, and found that I could continue to see my doctor. Once enrolled, my medications were available to me at no cost. Because I had Medicaid, I was able to continue to take my medications and be treated by a physician I trusted. Medicaid enabled me to work a part-time job.

Now I have found a new job, and I am working full time. My new employer offers health insurance coverage. So now because the Medicaid program was there when I needed it I will be able to rely on private insurance for my medications. Without Medicaid to help me during these last ten months, I would not have been able to continue to work.

I request that the committee support Medicaid expansion dollars in the budget. There are thousands of people like me who need Medicaid to be healthy enough to work. Should I ever be in between jobs again I would like to know that there is a safety net for me.