

My six-year-old boy, Leo, is a recipient of the Ohio Department of Health's Children's Medical Handicap (CMH) program. I am deeply concerned about the proposed changes to this program in the Governor's budget. CMH has supported our son's extensive medical and therapy needs since 2014. We are a middle-income family with private insurance, and rolling CMH under Medicaid would essentially take away this vital program from us and thousands of other hard-working low- and middle-income families.

Leo was born with a neuro-metabolic syndrome and a sensory processing disorder that impact all aspects of his development. He also has a vision impairment and a foot deformity. His communication is severely limited, requiring a speech generating device and frequent speech therapy sessions. Leo did not walk until he was 29 months old; he requires ankle orthotics, a proprioception vest and weekly physical therapy. He continues to struggle with fine motor tasks for daily living, which are the focus of his weekly occupational therapy.

CMH has provided for Leo's extensive needs in a myriad of ways. After Leo has exhausted our private insurance plan's therapy visits (usually by May), it covers physical and occupational therapy throughout the year. It also covers the intervention he receives for his feeding disorder, orthotics and vest after our insurance runs out. His vision care has required surgery and we expect future surgeries as well; CMH covers this beyond what our insurance covers. Over and above having access to needed medical care, we are grateful for local advocates, such as public health nurses [also funded by CMH], who have helped us navigate a complex and confusing healthcare system.

Leo has a long way to go on his journey to adulthood. Leo relies on therapeutic interventions to gain crucial skills he will need all his life. Trained therapists provide expertise that I, as a parent, do not have and cannot provide. Losing CMH would be a direct setback to his development and put an overwhelming stress on our finances. His needs far exceed our ability to pay for them even with private insurance. Our family medical expenses with CMH exceed \$10,000 each year. Without CMH, we would likely be paying twice as much annually.

As a hard-working middle income family with a child who has special needs, we know we are not alone in relying on the safety net of the CMH program. It is not broken; it is a payor of last resort. Please ensure that the CMH program stays intact to support the most vulnerable children in low-income and middle-income families.

Thank you.

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