

## Testimony in support of HB 440 5 December 2018

I am an emergency physician with 40 years on the street and in the emergency department (ED) since 1978. I have served as a paramedic in the streets of Cleveland, as an RN and physician in tough and busy emergency departments in Cleveland and Columbus. In keeping with the Hippocratic oath to always advocate with highest integrity for my patients I urge this legislative body to enact HB 440, and in so doing, bring compassionate and cost-effective “Medicare for All” to all Ohioans.

The emergency department is the only part of our health care non-system mandated, as we should be, by federal statute to see every patient without regard to their insurance or financial status. As such, I am up close and personal, eye to eye and heart to heart with all worthy working Ohioans abandoned by the business model of health insurance. While the Affordable Care Act aka “Obamacare” has decreased the number of uninsured by 40-50%, many, many persons cannot afford the bankruptcy inducing premiums, deductibles and co-pays. The Affordable Care Act was, after all, authored by the health insurers and Big Pharma for the purpose of keeping them firmly in control of health care delivery. The guy who fixes my car in his small business garage, my barber who cuts my admittedly few hairs, the server who waits on my wife and I at Bob Evans, these are good working Ohioans and deserve health care. Our profits-before-care system, the only one among advanced nations in the world, treats these good Ohioans as if they were throwaway disposable parts. I share their tears. I will tell you some of their stories in a moment.

My professional association, the American College of Emergency Physicians, (ACEP) reports that fully 81% of us surveyed frequently see patients seriously harmed by lack of health insurance. I submit that the 19% who do not report such either work in incredibly affluent areas, are blinded by conservative economic ideology, or are simply so busy pulling drowning swimmers from the river they haven’t looked upstream to note that it is lack of health insurance that is throwing our patients in the river in the first place. ( ACEP survey September 2015) I am proud that ACEP is also suing Anthem insurance for retroactively denying payment for emergent patient visits to the emergency department .56% of all physicians overall across all specialties support single payer health care. ( Merritt-Hawkins survey, 2017) I am passionately one of them.

“Tim” I saw twice. The first time he was suffering from atrial fibrillation, a dangerous rapid and irregular heartbeat. “Tim’s” wife and I had to convince him to accept hospital admission. “Tim” was aware that his insurance had a \$10,000 dollar deductible and that his teenage girls needed braces. The necessary hospitalization financially devastated “Tim’s” family. Tim could not afford the “Eliquis” that kept blood clots from forming in his heart. I saw “Tim” again 2 months later when his heart sent a blood clot to his brain causing a catastrophic stroke. “Tim” had been worried about braces for his girls, now he can’t even talk to them. Although only in his mid-forties “Tim’s” life as breadwinner and supportive family man is gone, taken away because he had, as the market theorists like to say, too much “skin in the game”.

“Bobby” is a teenage diabetic I put in the intensive care unit twice in life-threatening diabetic ketoacidosis. As far as I know “Bobby” is not yet one of the 50,000 Americans who die yearly from lack of health insurance, but like Scrooge’s “Tiny Tim”, “Bobby” will not have many more Christmases without this legislative body enacting HB 440. ( American Journal of Public Health September 2009) “Bobby’s” mother, fighting demons of her own, has trouble keeping her own head above water with chaotic frequent moves, job changes and the paperwork required to keep her Medicaid status current. Our emergency department social worker can get “Bobby” a short-term supply of his expensive insulin. When this short-term solution runs out, “Bobby” is back in the ICU. One of these episodes of diabetic ketoacidosis “Bobby” will not survive. I applaud Governor Kasich’s moral decision to accept Medicaid expansion in Ohio. I urge this august body not to reverse the Affordable Care Act’s expansion of Ohio Medicaid, nor to enact further barriers to Medicaid enrollment. Better yet, enact HB 440 into law.

“Sue” was diagnosed with gallstones and discharged from an outlying southeastern Ohio emergency department and referred to a surgeon to have her gallbladder out. “Sue” and her husband have a small business cleaning office buildings and homes. She was often paid cash “under the table” and had no insurance. The surgeon demanded \$200 up front to even see her for an office visit. This so often happens, I can stabilize patients in the emergency department and either admit them to the hospital if they are sick enough, or discharge home if they are too “well” for admission, either way they eventually go home, in need of further specialist’s care who often will not see them if they are uninsured. Or they can’t afford their meds. This is borne out by numerous nationwide academic studies. Such patients return to the ER sicker than they were before. “Sue” is now my patient and very, very, ill from cholecystitis and sepsis, her temperature is 104, her gallstones have totally damned up her gallbladder. She now needs emergency surgery, so much more dangerous than if she could have seen the surgeon who wanted \$200 up front. Please pass HB 440.

“Sam” is a suicidal teen who will wait in my emergency department a full week before he can be placed in psychiatric hospitalization. “Pete” is having chest pain, likely he is on the way to a heart attack, but refuses hospital admission as he is concerned about the cost. “Ed’s” broken arm is now bent and doesn’t work so well, the orthopedic physician he was referred to wouldn’t see him unless he had cash up front. “Bill” is at risk of losing his job as a truck driver as he will lose his DOT certification if he doesn’t get a sleep study, but he can’t get a sleep study as he has no insurance. Is Ohio better off when “Bill” loses his job and can’t support his family? “Tina” one of my servers at Bob Evans suffers from severe osteoarthritis of her knees, she does a good job hiding the pain working for the tips she needs to support her grandkids. Like “Tina”, my wife and I are raising grandchildren because of the opioid epidemic. Unlike “Tina’s” situation I had good health insurance and was able to get knee replacements when every step in the emergency department hurt and the patients were saying “Doc, are you OK?” “Tina’s” so-called “wait time” for knee replacements will be five years, until she is 65 and can get Medicare.

There are thousands, millions of “Tims. Bobbys, Sues, Sams, Petes, Eds and Bills and Tinas” “across our nation. Ohio can lead the way in doing the right thing for our citizens, for our

businesses, for us all by enacting HB 440. With all the integrity and character that sustains me through every emergency department shift I urge you as my legislators to enact HB 440.

If one is a fiscal conservative or business person the economic facts re: the cost-effectiveness of Ohio single payer are clear and cogent. 95% of Ohioans will spend far less money on healthcare, there will be slightly higher taxes yes, but this mild increase in taxes is insignificant alongside the huge savings for all gained by the disappearance of premiums, deductibles, co-pays and lowered drug costs. May I refer you to Dr. Gerald Friedman's work "Economic Analysis of Single Payer Health Care in Ohio: Context, Savings, Costs, Financing." Universal healthcare systems around the world efficiently spend half the money we do, for better results.

I have presented here the moral argument as did Gov. Kasich when ordering Medicaid expansion in Ohio: "I respect the fact that you believe in small government. I do too. I also happen to know that you're a person of faith. Now, when you die and get to the, get to the, uh, to the meeting with St. Peter, he's probably not gonna' ask you how much you did about keeping government small, but he's going to ask you what you did for the poor. Better have a good answer. " I submit that our market based healthcare non-system is like the "Titanic" sinking. The richest passengers got lifeboats, everyone else, my barber, my mechanic, my Bob Evans server were locked below decks to die. Gentlepersons, it is within your power to save the lives of thousands of good Ohioans.

I thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. I close with a 1918 quote by the esteemed American surgeon Dr. James Peter Warbasse : " Among the wealthy there now is a surfeit of doctors; among the poor, too few.... I believe that the wives of coal miners and iron workers are as worthy of the best scientific attention and the tenderest care in the hours of their need as are the wives of the rich. I believe that they should have it, not as a charity or welfare enterprise, but as a matter of social justice. It is their right." Over a hundred years of free market healthcare has failed utterly to do the job or control costs. We propose fair, equitable healthcare through a model we have seen work well: Medicare. It is time for Medicare for All Ohioans.