



To: Ohio House Finance Committee

From: Michele Kimball, President and CEO, Physicians for Fair Coverage

Date: May 6, 2019

Re: Substitute House Bill 166, Main Operating Budget – Surprise Billing

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a written statement regarding the surprise billing provisions included in Substitute House Bill 166, Ohio's main operating budget.

Physicians for Fair Coverage (PFC) is a non-profit, non-partisan, alliance of physicians dedicated to improving patient protections, promoting transparency, and ensuring access to care for patients in Ohio and nationwide. Our membership of tens of thousands of physicians cares for millions of patients each year in thousands of facilities nationwide, including Ohio.

Substitute House Bill 166 unexpectedly includes language relating to out-of-network insurance coverage. While PFC remains committed to working with the legislature, executive administration, and all stakeholders on this important issue, we are unable to support the language currently included in Sub. HB 166.

We appreciate the efforts by you and your colleagues to address solutions that protect patients from surprise medical bills after receiving unanticipated out-of-network care. However, **we strongly believe this language could be harmful and -- in order to fully protect patients -- should be removed from the budget bill and the issue fully vetted by all interested parties through stand-alone legislation.**

PFC has been discussing this problem with numerous legislators and interested parties over the past several months, and we believe a deliberate committee process is needed to ensure the proper solution is identified. A rush to address this issue through the budget process – ***as written in the bill and without proper consideration*** -- could have unintended consequences that may result in higher costs, narrower insurance networks, and limited access to needed care.

PFC is committed to working with the legislature, executive administration, and all stakeholders to find a comprehensive and fair solution to address the underlying issues that cause surprise medical bills and finally ends these unanticipated costs for all Ohio patients. To do so, comprehensive legislation must be developed that offers:

1. strong patient protections to effectively limit costs and truly take the patient out of the middle of reimbursement considerations between the provider and insurer;
2. provides fair reimbursement by the insurer directly to the provider to ensure access to care, especially in rural areas; and
3. improves transparency of both provider pricing and insurance networks.

To achieve these important goals, we formally ask you to remove language addressing out-of-network balance billing from the substitute budget bill to allow for proper consideration of this issue through the legislative and committee process.

Physicians for Fair Coverage thanks you for your consideration of this very important matter and stands ready to work together with you to comprehensively address and end surprise medical bills for the people of Ohio.