

**Testimony on H.B. 166: Main Operating Budget for FY 2020 - 2021 House Finance
Committee
May 7, 2019**

WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY

Good morning Chairman Oelslager and members of the Finance Committee;

My name is Zachery Moats. I would like to thank all of you for this opportunity to the committee. I am a member of an organization called NOBLE (Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality). Most of my time with NOBLE thus far has been spent focusing on Medicaid, as a leader of the Medicaid working group. This has given me the opportunity to dig deep into healthcare policies at the state level, especially regarding Medicaid Expansion, which is the reason that I am here today. I come before you in support of keeping Medicaid expansion as is without exception.

Just last year, four additional states voted to expand Medicaid bringing the total to 37 states, including DC. The national conversation on the program continues to shift. With the rising costs of healthcare, more people are worried about whether one medical emergency might bankrupt them. This is especially true for low-income Ohioans. That principle is at the core of the Medicaid program: to meet the health needs of those who cannot afford it. With Medicaid people are less burdened with insurmountable medical costs. Medicaid allows people to obtain adequate healthcare which contributes to their ability to be a productive Ohioan.

Over the past year, there has been a legal battle over work requirements in both Arkansas and Kentucky. Arkansas was the first state to implement work requirements for Medicaid expansion recipients. As a result, over 18,000 individuals were kicked off the program. In his ruling halting the implementation of the work requirements, Judge Boasberg stated that Department of Health and Human Services approval of the Arkansas waiver was “arbitrary and capricious...because it did not address...whether and how the project would implicate the ‘core’ objective of Medicaid: the provision of medical coverage to the needy.” Do not let Ohioans needlessly suffer the same fate.

At the moment, over 600,000 people are covered by Medicaid Expansion in the state of Ohio. The Ohio Department of Medicaid conducted a study last year of Medicaid expansion recipients. This study found that 93.8% of Medicaid expansion enrollees were either employed or met one of the exemption criteria outlined in the recently approved waiver. The implementation of a work requirement would affect so few Ohioans, and the potential detrimental consequences of such a move would place a heavier burden on Ohioans across the state. Arkansas’s system proves this. Hospitals, especially public hospitals like Metro Health in Cleveland and those in rural areas, are also at risk of losing money, jobs, and more if implementation results in people being kicked off of Medicaid rolls. Representatives, in each of your districts, you know these people, they need continued help. Medicaid expansion has been a widely beneficial addition to the state’s programming, and I hope that you will fund this program in full without exception during this cycle’s budget deliberation.

Thank you once again for the opportunity.