Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the committee, my name is Ken Fletcher and I’m the Director of Advocacy in Ohio. I am pleased to support HB 11, a bill to provide for tobacco cessation coverage for Medicaid recipients and Ohio state employees.

The American Lung Association is the oldest voluntary public health organization in the United States and is committed to eliminating tobacco use and tobacco-related disease. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, killing nearly half a million Americans each year. However, nearly seven out of ten smokers want to quit.1 HB 11 would ensure that smokers in both Medicaid and the State Employee Health Plan have a comprehensive, barrier-free quit smoking benefit. This improved benefit will help both populations quit smoking.

Nationwide, Medicaid enrollees smoke at a higher rate than the general population. And despite the falling smoking rates in recent years, Medicaid enrollees have not experienced the same improvements. Ohio Medicaid enrollees smoke at high rates—estimates range from 45.12 percent to 47.43 percent of enrollees smoke. Helping these individuals quit will save both lives and money.

By reducing the overall smoking rate by as little as one percent, the cost of the Ohio Medicaid program would be reduced by as much as $60.6 million.4 To reduce the smoking rate, people who smoke need help to quit. HB 11 is a necessary first step to help smokers quit. Data show that Medicaid coverage of smoking cessation treatments can reduce smoking prevalence.5 Similarly, data show barriers, such as prior authorization, is associated with fewer prescriptions filled.6 In Ohio, only 14 percent of smoker on Medicaid are utilizing tobacco cessation medications.7 This legislation aims to improve the percentage of enrollees who utilize cessation treatment by increasing coverage and decreasing barriers to access treatments.

HB 11 expands the same robust benefit to the State Employee Health Plan. This coverage will help smokers who are also state employees and their families quit, improving their health and helping the state save money by preventing smoking cause morbidities. Quitting smoking is the single best thing a person can do for their health. There are health benefits to quitting at any age. Improving quit-smoking benefits will help more smokers quit. The State Employee Health Plan is often one of the largest private, employer-sponsored health plans in a state. As a result, it covers more individuals and families than other plans. The plan also serves as an example of what coverage should be or an unofficial benchmark.
American Lung Association in Ohio  
Comments on HB 11  
June 19, 2019

Some states have even used the state employee health plan as their official benchmark plan. Improving cessation coverage in this plan will have ripple effects.

The American Lung Association in Ohio strongly supports HB 11 and urges its swift passage. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kenneth Fletcher,  
Director of Advocacy  
American Lung Association in Ohio  
Ken.fletcher@lung.org  
248-220-5213

---


