



**State Representative Thomas E. West – 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District**  
**State Representative Kristin Boggs – 18<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District**  
**Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 416**

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for giving Ranking Member Boggs and me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 416.

HB 416 seeks to designate the week prior to the Affordable Care Act open enrollment deadline as "Health Insurance Participation Week". This serves to inform members of the public on the benefits of having health insurance and to encourage members of the public without insurance to purchase coverage through the Ohio health insurance marketplace, or any successor entity. As we all know, there is a vast sea of information out there about health insurance, and because of this, we believe it necessary to facilitate the acquisition of that information by drawing awareness to the importance of health insurance and how to obtain it.

I would like to share with you some of my personal experience to make clearer the subject matter. As a social worker for more than 20 years, I've seen firsthand how often individuals and families were unaware of their options for getting covered. I can recall specifically when I met with an elderly constituent who had been diagnosed with cancer – she did not have health insurance and was seeking assistance in applying for coverage under the Affordable Care Act. We were able to help her complete her application, and I'll never forget the hug she gave me afterwards. The fact that she could have a primary care physician to depend upon and receive affordable healthcare coverage for the first time quite literally meant the world to her. This woman was informed by our outreach and awareness campaign to get people insured – proof of the importance of conducting such outreach.

State employees are notified each year of when the open enrollment period begins and ends, but individuals across our state may not receive the same prompting. To that end, the U.S. Census Bureau reported earlier this year that the number of

people without health insurance increased for the first time since the Great Recession. Here in Ohio, our rate increased from 6.1% to 7%, good for 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation. We must use all tools at our disposal to drive down the uninsured rate, and this bill is one of those tools. The designation of Health Insurance Participation Week will provide a marketing and education push to ensure that all Ohioans are aware of the opportunity to get covered.

Especially in a time when the state's IT software for benefits is plagued with issues that have put eligible Ohioans at risk of losing their Medicaid coverage, we must do all we can to promote and ensure health care access.

Thank you, and we would now be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.