

## INTRODUCTION

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the importance of improving the lives of Ohioans, especially children, through enhanced care delivery. UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Ohio (UHC) is committed to improving the health and lives of the members we are privileged to serve. We are united behind our mission: to help people live healthier lives and make the health system work better for everyone. UHC is a dedicated partner to both the state and local communities and we leverage our extensive national and enterprise experience to create solutions that meet the needs of Ohioans. We know that significant challenges exist in addressing the health of Ohioans and are committed to helping our state partners meet those challenges.

UHC employs a focused effort to care for our members and we build innovations, research, and interventions to improve the lives of all Ohioans, regardless of age. For the purposes of this testimony, we will address our belief that a data-driven approach coupled with community-based connections and services provides the best opportunity to improve health outcomes for children and families.

## DRIVING BETTER CARE FOR OHIO'S CHILDREN

The following principles drive our strategy for caring for Ohio's children and their families:

### *Ensure robust maternal and infant care.*

Access to comprehensive and well-coordinated care is critical to address health disparities and ensure children have access to preventative health services. Connection to care should happen at every stage of life for children and their families. We support models that enhance the social and emotional support women receive during pregnancy and increase the capacity for community-based care. For example, United Health Foundation's \$1.7 million contribution to Celebrate ONE trained 72 Community Health Workers (CHWs) to expand the number of community-based caregivers that conduct outreach, build trust, and reduce barriers to care. This program aims to reduce the risk for chronic morbidity and infant mortality and has already reached more than 27,000 women each year in targeted Columbus communities.

Racial, socioeconomic, geographic, and other disparities continue to drive poor health outcomes for Ohioans, including outcomes for infants and children. Efforts focused on reducing or eliminating specific health disparities should be reflected through care coordination approaches and culturally distinct practices to address the inequities that result in disparate care. UHC launched a targeted initiative in Mahoning County to bolster prenatal and post-partum visits and reduce disparities. This project utilized existing care coordination resources – a Community Health Worker (CHW) and an RN Care Manager (CM) – to more effectively connect pregnant members with Obstetric services. The initiative resulted in an increase of prenatal and post-partum visits and the disparity index decreased significantly for both measures.<sup>1</sup> These results demonstrate that a higher touch, field-based care

<sup>1</sup> Prenatal visits – 77.3% for the county overall vs. 88.9% for those engaged in the program. Disparity Index fell from 15.98 to 6.88 (less than 5 indicating a lack of disparity) over the same time period. Postpartum visits – 57.1% for the county overall vs. 61% for those engaged in the program and the Disparity Index fell from 37.43 to 9.83 (less than 5 indicating a lack of disparity) over the same time period.

management approach has the potential to reduce disparities and improve quality scores. UHC is currently embarking on a similar project focused on improving well child visits in the first 15 months of life by utilizing CHWs to address common and member-specific barriers to pediatric visits.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Partner with providers to enhance overall outcomes.***

Deep-rooted and balanced partnerships with providers are essential to enhance health outcomes for members. Communication, collaboration and longevity improve the delivery of health services at the community and member-level. UHC continuously enhances the way we work with care providers, collaborating to establish better approaches to improve patient care.

For example, UHC partnered with the Ohio affiliate of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to improve Adolescent Well Check (AWC) visit rates. UHC worked to identify and engage six provider practices across the state to promote strategies developed by the AAP while also offering the providers an opportunity to pilot a new safety tool. As a result, AWCs and confidential screenings for health and social issues including depression significantly increased for 21,200 adolescents.

UHC's value-based contracting arrangement with The Child & Family Health Collaborative of Ohio connects our members with dozens of high quality community behavioral health Medicaid providers, who are working to improve health outcomes, innovate service delivery systems and benefit design, achieve savings, foster health integration, and establish administrative efficiencies.

### ***Safeguard appropriate care of foster care populations.***

Children impacted by the child welfare system require the holistic coordination of services to address their needs, assist with care transitions during periods of foster care placement, and minimize additional trauma. Providers must be trained in evidence-based methods to understand and treat trauma. Communication and coordination between all providers and caregivers serving a child is critical to ensure comprehensive and well-informed care. It is our belief that all youth in foster care require some level of intervention and that children in foster care are part of a specialty population with higher service needs, thereby requiring a unique approach to clinical coordination.

Our clinical goals are to improve the quality of and access to care for all children in foster care and to drive long-term change for the betterment of the foster care system. UHC has a team of experts dedicated to help children and youth in foster care and their families and is supported by CHWs, care managers, and Family Advisors at UnitedHealthcare's Child and Family Engagement Center. UHC's integrated field-based care management teams work side-by-side with county agencies, families, and providers to serve the needs of vulnerable youth. In some counties, we have staff on the ground at the children's services agency to coordinate care for these children. In Franklin County, for example, UHC recently received the Children Services Community Advocate Award for helping connect foster children to mentors.

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<sup>2</sup> In Hamilton County – current trends indicate an improvement of 12% in the African-American population. Index from 36.55 to 5.15 and a reduction in the disparity.

UHC is currently working with Ohio's Public Children's Services agencies on several key health measures for children in their custody, including early detection of dental caries and treatment, increased lead screenings for all 1- and 2-year-olds, improved immunization and wellness visit rates and early detection of behavioral health and chronic conditions. The measures will also include educational efforts on the appropriate use of pediatric behavioral health medication and focus on increasing crisis stabilization and supports for children and families.

Support of foster families, kinship caregivers, caseworkers, and providers through training and stabilization services is critical to better care for children in custody. We understand the negative impact of the opioid crisis on Ohioans, especially on the child welfare system, and provide support and referrals to the Ohio Sobriety, Treatment, and Reducing Trauma (START) program to help stabilize families impacted by drug use. Addressing trauma is an important component of caring for this population and UHC provides support through development opportunities and trauma-informed trainings.

Collaborating with the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA), UHC created a training to help our nurses, foster parents and child welfare staff develop additional skills to serve vulnerable youth. Additionally, we realize that the demands on time and resources for foster families, kinship caregivers, and county caseworkers are high. To ease some of that burden, we host community wellness events to make it easier for families to connect with our care management staff, get flu shots and receive health and wellness education.

UHC's commitment to children and young adults experiencing homelessness was recently expressed in the form of an \$840,000 grant from the United Health Foundation to Cincinnati's Lighthouse Youth & Family Services. The grant will help expand access to behavioral and physical health services for more than 5,000 transitioning and homeless children and young adults over the next three years.

Ongoing resiliency measures and tools assist older children and young adults with their transition to adulthood. UHC's *On My Way* tool helps youth build critical life skills by preparing them for many real-world situations that lie ahead. This web-based tool teaches practical skills such as managing bank accounts, securing housing, creating a resume, finding job training, and applying for college. UHC also serves as the Third Party Administrator to the Child and Family Health Collaborative for the Bridges Program, which provides housing and case management services to former foster youth. In this role, UHC manages and coordinates the Bridges Provider Network which provides housing, training, financial literacy, educational and maternal child health navigator services, and helps promote the program to youth in need.

### ***Drive collaboration for continuous improvement.***

Demands on the health care system, and on the state of Ohio will continue to emerge as people face current and new barriers to health and wellness. UHC's quality improvement process takes a collaborative, systematic, and data-driven approach to maintain and improve the health of Ohioans. UHC is committed to the continual advancement of the Medicaid program and to improving the lives of the children and families we are privileged to serve.