

## HB 49 - Ohio State Biennial Budget

Jeff Daniels

### Testimony to Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health & Medicaid

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health & Medicaid, my name is Jeff Daniels. I have been a resident of Ohio for over 31 years. I have a loved one who is afflicted with mental illness. As an active member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Ohio, I'd like to tell you about my family's journey along our long path of living with mental illness. Having taught NAMI Family-to-Family classes and heard the stories of over 60 other family members with mentally ill loved ones, I can say that our journey is typical of other families in our situation.

My son is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The disease manifested itself initially as a behavioral problem in high school. Unfortunately, the long delay in diagnosis set him on an early life diversion of spending 14 months languishing in a substance abuse treatment facility, and spending several subsequent years cycling in and out of facilities as bipolar illness took over his life. All this time, family and former friends insisted that all that was needed was discipline and focus – “get a job” was a common theme from other family members. In fact, he could not work, and the behavioral problem – manifesting itself through substance abuse – was most likely self-medication for the bipolar disease.

At about 25 years old, he attempted suicide. His life was saved after over a week on a ventilator, and he was sent to a drug rehab facility. Once again, the diagnosis of bipolar disorder was missed. Needless-to-say, the cycle of aberrant behavior continued for several years after the attempted suicide. We continued our financial support for several years to keep him off the street, but the manic periods became so intense that we overcame our own denials and finally recognized there was an underlying mental illness. At this point, we looked to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) for help and support. When the situation got extremely difficult, he was hospitalized several times at Twin Valley Behavioral Health Facility, and once in Northwest Ohio Psychiatric Hospital. **During this period, we were able to establish insurance coverage for my loved one through the Medicaid expansion. The steady access to mental health services my loved one had access to through the Medicaid expansion was invaluable to stabilization and ongoing recovery from mental illness.**

Hopefully and thankfully I can now say that his situation has been stable for over a year. His caregivers, the wonderful people in the NAMI support system, and the dedicated public servants (health professionals, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained police, the probate court system, Mental Health America of Franklin County Ombudsman, and the health and social workers at Southeast Healthcare Services) have taught me about human kindness, giving, and love in a way that I would have never known if it were not for my loved one's mental illness. My loved one is my “teacher”, and this life-learning experience has taught me that a health care safety net is a necessity for those who suffer from the disability of mental illness. Medicaid is a foundation stone for their daily struggle to maintain their health. Without Medicaid, many of the mentally ill and their families would be unable to adequately care for their loved ones. Unable to care for themselves, ultimately many more of our mentally ill citizens would end up dead, on the street, or in jail - at the bottom of the “default” behavioral healthcare system.

I urge you, the members of this committee, and every member of the 132<sup>nd</sup> Ohio General Assembly, to maintain the Medicaid expansion in this state budget. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on HB 49 and the importance of the Medicaid expansion in my loved one's life and the life of hundreds of thousands of Ohioans with mental illness.