



STATE SENATOR  
**CHARLETA B. TAVARES**

---

15<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

SPONSOR TESTIMONY SCR 11

SENATE INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2018

Good morning Chairman Hottinger, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on SCR 11. The Resolution is being jointly sponsored by Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko and myself.

When Senate Concurrent Resolution 11 was offered on June 8, 2017, it was an immediate response to the U.S. House of Representatives passage of the American Health Care Act of 2017. The Ohio Senate Democratic Caucus opposed, and still opposes, repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We collectively

expressed our trepidations with the American Health Care Act because it would have had an immediate, detrimental impact on Ohio's most vulnerable population groups. Fortunately – from our perspective – all three attempts made by the U.S. Senate to repeal and replace the ACA were unsuccessful, which preserved the health insurance of more than 1.26 million Ohioans under Medicaid expansion.

We are not sure whether there will be more attempts to repeal or modify the ACA, but we would like to use this testimony to address a key component of the ACA: Medicaid expansion.

Medicaid expansion has been extremely vital in keeping nearly one-fifth of Ohioans, ages 19-64, covered and healthy. This past August, the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) released its assessment of Medicaid expansion and found the program to be successful, having had positive impacts on many Ohioans. The uninsured rate fell by more than half, from 32.4% before Medicaid expansion to 12.8%. ODM also found that 71% of former expansion beneficiaries left the program because they found a job or were earning more money. Moreover, visits to the

emergency room dropped 17%, a \$52 million savings, because most beneficiaries reported the increased use of primary care.

Ohio is one of the hardest hit states by the opioid epidemic. There have been some misguided notions that Medicaid expansion would worsen the epidemic – a claim that couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, the rate of Medicaid expansion enrollees with opioid use disorders has risen steadily over the past years, and those suffering from addiction have received treatment and mental health counseling because of the expansion. Cheri Walter, CEO of the Ohio Association of Behavioral Health Authorities, said “Medicaid expansion has had the single biggest impact on individuals with an addiction, (allowing) hundreds of thousands of individuals who have an addiction to get the health care that they need to help them recover.”

I thank you for your time and I urge favorable consideration and passage of SCR 11. I am happy to take any questions that members of the committee may have at this time.