



March 2, 2021

Representative Bill Roemer  
Chair, Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
77 South High Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Funding for the Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH) Program and Medicaid

Dear Chair Roemer and Members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services,

On behalf of people living with cystic fibrosis (CF) in Ohio, we write to support Governor DeWine's proposal in the Executive Budget to preserve funding for the Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH) Program and Ohio Medicaid in the SFY 22-23 budget. These programs play a critical role in promoting the health and well-being of Ohioans with CF, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and we urge you to retain this funding as you consider HB 110.

#### **About Cystic Fibrosis**

Cystic fibrosis is a life-threatening genetic disease that affects approximately 30,000 children and adults in the United States, including nearly 1,550 Ohioans. CF causes the body to produce thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and digestive system, which can lead to life-threatening infections. Because cystic fibrosis is a complex, multi-system condition and requires specialized treatment and medications, most people with CF receive care at one of the more than 130 accredited CF care centers in the United States, including 13 in Ohio, where clinicians use evidence-based guidelines to deliver multi-disciplinary care. While great strides have been made in the treatment of the disease, the lives of young people with cystic fibrosis are still cut far too short; half of young adults with the disease still die before age 30.

#### **Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH) Program**

CMH is a state program run by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) that serves as a safety net for children with special health care needs who meet medical and financial eligibility requirements. The program fills gaps in coverage related to the child's special health condition and acts as a payer of last resort to help families access the services their child needs. CMH also provides services for people over age 21 with cystic fibrosis, including prescription medications, medical supplies, special formula, and public health nursing visits. **While CMH is a resource for some patients enrolled in Medicaid, it also helps privately insured CF families with their out-of-pocket costs, allowing them to maintain their commercial insurance and sometimes diverting them from public coverage.**

#### **Ohio Medicaid**

Medicaid is also a crucial source of coverage for people with CF, and we urge you to ensure the SFY 22-23 budget preserves existing Medicaid funding, eligibility, and benefits. Over half of children and a third of adults living with CF in Ohio depend on the program for some or all of their health care needs.

**Medicaid plays an important role in helping people with cystic fibrosis afford the specialized care and**

**treatments they need to stay healthy and, for many with CF, it fills coverage gaps in private insurance that would otherwise leave patients with unsustainable out-of-pocket costs.**

Additionally, preserving Medicaid funding will help protect the financial viability of hospitals and providers that may be in a weakened financial state due to the pandemic. CF care centers are often housed within academic medical centers, which serve a disproportionate number of low-income patients. These medical centers rely on Medicaid reimbursement for a large portion of their revenue and many have been in financially precarious positions due to reduced volume in certain procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some CF care centers were forced to furlough or lay off staff during this time and cuts to provider reimbursement could further exacerbate these issues and result in centers losing critical staff.

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Medicaid and the CMH Program remain more important than ever in helping those with CF access the care and treatments they need, especially during these uncertain times. Please retain Governor DeWine's request to fund Medicaid, the Medically Handicapped Children line item, and the Targeted Health Services – Over 21 line item in the SFY 22-23 budget. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary B. Dwight', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mary B. Dwight  
Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer  
Senior Vice President of Policy and Advocacy

Cc: Representative Thomas West, Ranking Member, Finance Subcommittee  
Representative Jay Edwards, Finance Subcommittee  
Representative Scott Lipps, Finance Subcommittee  
Representative Allison Russo, Finance Subcommittee