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Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality/NOBLE

Gail Long

Testimony before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

HB 33

Chair Dolan, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Gail Long and I am a long-time member of NOBLE.

The primary goal of NOBLE is to bring the voices of those most impacted by the State's Biennium Budget to the table. We testify, we meet with elected officials like yourselves, we make phone calls and write letters and most importantly we tell our stories and how policies that impact the budget directly impact our lives.

Today I am here to ask you to pass the following in the Medicaid line items of the budget:

1. Expand general Medicaid eligibility up to 300% of the federal poverty level for mothers and children and exclude any mandatory work requirements;
2. Allow for continuous Medicaid coverage for children up to six years old;
3. Protect Optional services such as dental, vision and mental health;
4. Fund doula services;
5. Certify midwives to be able to practice in Ohio;
6. Fully implement Ohio Rise, the Medicaid program that provides comprehensive care for children with complex needs and/or multi-system youth;
7. Include over-the-counter medication and supplies through Medicaid Managed Care plans (this is now a given practice in the private Managed Care plans);
8. Increase funding for lead poisoning prevention;
9. Establish or expand prevention programs covering mold, mercury and both indoor and outdoor air pollution to keep kids from getting sick.

NOBLE also urges you to continue to fund Ohio's Free Clinics and federally qualified health centers (FQHC's). For thousands of Ohioans these facilities are their health care lifeline.

Finally, the State will soon be faced with thousands of individuals losing their Medicaid coverage as the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 decoupled Medicaid from the Health Care Emergency. Beginning April 1st and for a 12-month period, people's eligibility will be redetermined after not having been done for the past three (3) years. For those who lose their eligibility, the Affordable Care Act may be unaffordable. For many, free care will not be accessible. Health care needs will go unmet and for many this will mean certain death or severe disability and ultimately be more expensive for the State. We are asking that the State of Ohio establish a Health Care Emergency and by doing this, allow for a continuation of health care coverage. By doing this, we, the citizens of the State of Ohio can hold our heads high and say that we believe that it is our responsibility to care for the medically uninsured.

Finally, NOBLE urges the Senate to maintain the increases proposed by the House version of the budget for Adult Protective Services and Community Based Senior Services. These two services are critical for the well-being of Ohio's increasing senior population. Community Based Senior Services in particular is a much more economical alternative to independent living than

institutional care. We know that elected officials understand this as you have taken Adult Protective Services from a previously unfunded mandate and gradually increased funds to this line item over the past several budget cycle. Hopefully there are no longer Counties in the State that are using Sheriff's as Adult Protective Services Workers.

Thank you for your time.