

To Chair Stewart and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Susan Koller, and I live in Cincinnati. Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on what I think should be included in the proposed 2026-2027 budget bill (HB 96). My main concern is that there are no changes or cuts to Ohio's Medicaid program in the 2026-2027 budget. This is very important to me because I am one of the approximately 3 million Ohioans who depend on Medicaid.

Saying that I could not survive without Medicaid would not be an exaggeration in my case. I have cerebral palsy and need help with all my activities of daily living. This includes everything from getting a drink of water to being showered and put to bed. For me to live independently, I rely on direct care workers to help me with these activities by providing me with 21 hours a day of personal care services. I can only get these services through a Medicaid waiver because no other health insurance company provides these services to the extent I need. Without these services I really could not get out of bed, let alone lead any kind of productive life.

Also if I did not have Medicaid coverage, my elderly mother would not have a life either because she would have to take care of me 24 hours a day. The time is fast approaching when my mother will not be able to take care of me.

Along with paying for my personal care needs to be completed, Medicaid also covers the medical equipment I need. This equipment includes an electric wheelchair, a shower chair, an overhead lift, and a manual Hoyer lift. Lastly, Medicaid is my only health insurance option. Medicaid covers all my visits to healthcare providers and medications.

Now that I have shared about my own need for Medicaid, I would like to specifically highlight one Medicaid change/cut that is included in the proposed 2026/2027 budget. I am referring to the provision in the budget stating that individuals in the Medicaid Expansion Group, also known as Group VIII, would automatically lose their Medicaid coverage if the federal government reduces the amount of Medicaid funds it gives states. I am opposed to this provision for several reasons. Firstly, it is wrong to take away individuals' health care coverage. Secondly, I may be indirectly impacted by this provision. While I am not in Group VIII, some of my own direct care workers may be in this group. If my direct care workers lose their benefits, they may try to find another job that could better compensate them for the loss of their benefits. This means I could end up losing my direct care workers. There is already a great shortage in the direct care field for numerous reasons including the fact that direct care workers are paid ridiculously low wages. I fear that this provision in the budget, would only exacerbate this shortage. That is why I am asking that the provision about individuals in Group VIII automatically losing their Medicaid benefits be removed from the budget entirely.

Along with ensuring there are no cuts or changes to Ohio's Medicaid program, I would also like to request that one more provision be added to the proposed 2026-2027 budget. I would like an automatic yearly cost of living increase for all direct care workers across all systems including Medicaid, Aging, and Developmental Disabilities. This provision would ensure that the wages of these hard-working indispensable employees keep pace with inflation. This provision would help lessen the direct care worker shortage that I mentioned above.

Thank you again for letting me submit testimony on what I think should be included in the 2026-2027 budget. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about my testimony.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Susan Koller