

## **Che Gadison Testimony**

### **Finance Committee- HB 96 Medicaid Expansion**

**March 13 2025**

Good afternoon Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney and Members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to give testimony on HB 96, and to speak specifically about proposed cuts to Medicaid expansion.

My name is Che Gadison and I am a member of the Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality. As a taxpaying Ohioan, it is frustrating that I have to lobby this committee to provide medicaid coverage to Ohioans who need it. Life happens to all of us, but one's socio-economic circumstances dictate the severity and the ability to overcome these changes and bounce back. When I pay taxes or when they are deducted from my paycheck, it is done so with the belief that if ever unforeseen circumstances were to happen, then the great state of Ohio that I have supported will support me back.

Currently, there are 3 million Ohioans enrolled in Medicaid because they cannot afford other healthcare options. Without Medicaid coverage these Ohioans cannot access needed services and medical care for their specific health condition due to injury, chronic or serious illness. Ohioans living in poorer communities will be the most negatively affected by cuts to Medicaid expansion especially those who suffer job loss or the inability to find employment. As it is the taxpayers responsibility to the state of Ohio to pay taxes, it is also Ohio's responsibility to provide the resources and tools Ohioans need to achieve this end. It is quite simple, sick people can't work and if you can't work, then you can't pay taxes.

Many Ohioans who are enrolled in Medicaid programs are employed and still live below the federal poverty line. Until wage increases match the cost of living, programs like Medicaid expansion will always be needed. It is impossible for most Medicaid enrollees to afford private healthcare or any other alternative medical coverage so they depend on expansion programs to provide this healthcare. Threatening medical coverage for over 3 million Ohioans is not something that I would expect our elected lawmakers to do. In fact, I expect all the members of this committee to stand with us, the people of Ohio, and declare that

Ohio's Medicaid programs are not a piece in Governor Dewine's chess game with the federal government. Our health is not something to be sacrificed or bargained with. These are our lives and our health. These things determine our ability to work and be the productive citizens of this great state that depends on us to provide resources, our tax dollars, to operate. Preserving and improving the healthcare of Ohioans should be paramount to this committee and its only concern and we should never deliberate on whether our lawmakers should or where to make cuts to its Medicaid and healthcare programs.

Health care and Medicaid expansion programs are not a luxury; these programs are a basic necessity that addresses Ohioans basic health needs. Medical insurance and coverage is something every American is entitled to and should never be on the chopping block. I commend the state of Ohio for doing a better job in providing Medicaid coverage to its residents than many other states within the US, and I ask that you continue this good work. I advocate for raising medical provider standards, increasing the quality of both mandatory and optional services provided by the state. I also ask for increased financial support to accommodate these healthcare programs and provide other essential medical needs for Ohio's vulnerable and less fortunate residents.

As a single mother who has often relied on Medicaid to provide healthcare for my family, I cannot communicate enough how essential these programs were to providing healthcare and giving my children the gift of good health. There are many other Ohioans like me, who are employed and still cannot afford private healthcare because the wages received do not keep up with the inflationary cost of living. Again, until the wages are increased to keep up with the cost of living then programs like Medicaid will always be needed.

I know that the current trend is to use language that dehumanizes the need and recipients of Medicaid benefits, such as referring to these Ohioans as 'assistance units'. This term takes the humanity away from those Ohioans who need these programs of why Medicaid expansion is important to provide the opportunity for good health to every Ohioan as our right and allows lawmakers to look at the issue from a purely operational, business point of view and not with the needed humanitarian perspective to fully understand the importance of these programs to the quality of life for many Ohio residents. We are not 'assistance units', we are Ohioans

who love, laugh and want the best for their families just as you do. We need the support of our state, of our lawmakers to ensure that all of Ohio's sons and daughters have the same opportunity for good health, quality healthcare and the environment to thrive.

I thank you for your time.