

**Jennifer Loeb**  
**CEO, Cincinnati's Ronald McDonald House**  
**On behalf of the Six Ohio Ronald McDonald Houses**

**Ohio House Medicaid Committee**

**February 25, 2025**

**Chair Gross, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Baker, and Committee Members:**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jennifer Loeb, and I am the CEO of the Ronald McDonald House of Cincinnati. I am here on behalf of the six Ronald McDonald Houses across Ohio, which play an essential role in caring for and supporting families while their children undergo life-saving medical treatment.

I come before you today to request the continuation of funding outlined in House Bill 96, which allows for Medicaid reimbursement for lodging at Ronald McDonald Houses. This funding is critical to ensuring that families in need can stay close to their hospitalized children without bearing an overwhelming financial burden.

**The Impact of Medicaid-Funded Lodging**

Due to the onboarding process for all the Ronald McDonald Houses as this new program was stood up, our data for the first cycle remains partial. However, the available numbers clearly illustrate the tremendous impact of this Medicaid funding on Ohio families. Even with this partial year, nearly 2,000 Ohio Medicaid families benefited by accessing lodging at Ronald McDonald Houses, amounting to approximately 17,000 nights of care. Many families experience extended or multiple stays throughout the year, underscoring the profound support provided by these facilities.

It is estimated that a full biennium will support nearly 4,000 families with over 34,000 nights of stay.

This funding has ensured that these families receive not only warm beds and hot meals but also access to laundry facilities, child and sibling activities, and safe spaces where they can heal, play, and find moments of joy amid their medical challenges.

One grateful parent shared:

*"We were so blessed to stay at the Ronald McDonald House. Knowing our daughter would be hospitalized for at least three to four weeks, having a place to stay—free of charge and right next to the hospital—lifted a huge financial burden. The staff, facilities, and meals were excellent. The extra donations of craft kits, toys, and snacks were wonderful treats for our child in the hospital."*

Children whose families stay at Ronald McDonald Houses are often among the sickest, have traveled the greatest distances for care, and require the longest hospital stays. Our Houses provide a vital community of support, helping parents remain strong, rested, and present for their child's medical journey.

## Why This Matters for Ohio Families and Medicaid

Access to Ronald McDonald Houses is often the deciding factor in whether a family being able to secure the care their child needs—or facing impossible financial and logistical barriers. Ohio is home to some of the world's leading pediatric hospitals, but for many families, accessing that care means traveling hundreds of miles, disrupting work and home life, incurring significant costs, and uprooting siblings from school and friends.

For families on Medicaid, this challenge is even greater. Data shows that:

- **50% of the children staying at Ohio's Ronald McDonald Houses are covered by Ohio Medicaid.**
- **Medicaid-eligible pediatric patients are almost always accompanied by a parent or guardian, creating a financial strain that makes lodging assistance critical.**

If children covered by Medicaid accounted for half of the total guest nights at Ohio's Ronald McDonald Houses, and the Ohio Department of Medicaid reimbursed lodging at an average of \$100 per night, the total cost was **\$2.5 million/FY**. Under the current FMAP cost-sharing structure, the **State of Ohio's share is 50% of the total cost**.

Our Houses are consistently at full capacity, with waiting lists of families desperate to stay close to their child's hospital.

## The Evidence-Based Benefits of Ronald McDonald Houses

Studies confirm the profound impact of Ronald McDonald Houses on family well-being and hospital experiences:

- A **2015 global study published in the Journal of Health Organization and Management** found that **94% of hospital administrators** believe Ronald McDonald Houses reduce parental stress, and more than **90% agree that they reduce costs for families and lessen the burden on hospitals**.
- A **Medical Care Research and Review study** surveying 5,400 families at 10 U.S. hospitals found that families staying at Ronald McDonald Houses reported a significantly more positive overall hospital experience compared to those who stayed elsewhere.

By funding lodging through Medicaid, Ohio is directly improving outcomes for children and their families.

## Our Request: Preserve the \$5 Million Appropriation

Ronald McDonald Houses across Ohio deeply appreciate our partnership with the Ohio Department of Medicaid in developing this lodging benefit. To continue supporting families in need, we respectfully request that the **\$5 million appropriation** for lodging assistance remain in the budget.

This appropriation is included in the **Medicaid Admin line item (651425)** with the following uncodified language:

*Of the foregoing appropriation item 651525, Medicaid Health Care Services, \$2,500,000 in each fiscal year shall be used by the Medicaid Director to work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to continue lodging as an administrative service affiliated with Ohio children's hospitals available for families with children who have special health care needs.*

## Keeping Families Close in Their Time of Need

By supporting this lodging benefit, you are keeping families together and ensuring they remain close to the critical care their children need. You are helping parents stay well-rested and nourished so they can be fully present for their child's medical journey. Most importantly, you are surrounding these families with a compassionate community at a time when they feel scared and alone.

This is a meaningful and impactful way for the state to show its commitment to families with critically ill children.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration.