

Chair Gross, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Baker, and members of the House Medicaid Committee,

Thank you for considering this testimony. My name is Dr. Shari Bolen. I am an internal medicine physician whose practice is in the city of Cleveland. I strongly urge you to remove two troubling items from Ohio's state operating budget. Both could have devastating impacts on Ohio families who depend on Medicaid expansion for their healthcare insurance coverage.

Specifically, I'm asking you to remove the following two items:

- Section 126.70 — This Medicaid Trigger Language could immediately end Medicaid expansion in Ohio if the federal government reduces its share of paying for the program's costs.
- Section 126.10 — Under this Federal Mirror Language, if the federal government pauses, suspends, or reduces funding for a federal program, Ohio could do the same to any similar state level program that uses federal funds.

The effect of the Medicaid expansion in Ohio, which started in 2014, was transformational for many of the patients in my internal medicine practice. The access to affordable health care the expansion made possible allowed my patients to more effectively manage their chronic illnesses, receive needed preventive care, and obtain their medications. They found better jobs, became more productive workers, and proudly contributed to their families and communities.

A 2018 evaluation of the effect of the Medicaid expansion in Ohio confirmed these observations. Enrollees reported better physical and mental health, less financial stress, an increased ability to work, and an increased ability to care for family members.

Sections 126.70 and 126.10, if enacted, would cause families to lose access to lifesaving services. Additionally, Ohio hospitals and health care facilities would lose revenue, forcing them to scale back services, lay off staff, and possibly close altogether. In addition, not covering health insurance now will lead to avoidable hospitalizations for complications of conditions which could have been prevented leading to billions in downstream health care costs. Both the health impacts and the economic impacts throughout Ohio would be devastating in the short and long term.

I ask you to consider my testimony and remove these two harmful items from Ohio's operating budget.

Thank you again for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Shari Bolen MD