

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ellena Privitera and I am a medical student who was born and raised in Ohio and currently attends The Ohio State University College of Medicine. 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 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.

In my core clinical rotations last year, I met countless people who relied on Ohio's Medicaid expansion to access healthcare. Even so, we still fell short in our ability to offer services, often questioning whether efficacious treatment regimens could be offered to some patients based on insurance status – pointing to a critical need for MORE investment in health care across our system, not less. Over 770,000 of my neighbors rely on the Medicaid expansion, and it's been incredibly successful in improving the health and well-being of my community.

By funding necessary surgeries and providing coverage for previously-untreated health conditions, the Medicaid expansion allowed people to return to work and take care of their families. A 2018 report from the Ohio Dept of Medicaid has shown that 71% of enrollees were able to leave the rolls because they found a job/were earning money. It also highlighted the role of the Medicaid expansion in addressing Ohio's addiction crisis, as over half of beneficiaries (630,000 people) received treatment for mental illness or substance abuse. At that time, more than one third of enrollees – over 26,000 Ohioans - who quit smoking said that Medicaid help them quit.

*Can you imagine talking to someone who got an injury at their job which prevented them from being able to walk, and being able to do nothing to stop it? If the Medicaid expansion didn't exist, that patient I spoke to after his knee surgery would not be doing Friday night polka dancing with his wife again. He would not have his job, and he wouldn't be able to support his children. This is just one of many stories that come to mind when I think of what Medicaid means to me as a future physician.*

As a future doctor, I would much rather learn about what is medically appropriate for my patients, rather than worry about what options they can and can't afford. I don't want to watch people suffer from conditions that could be prevented with earlier interventions. I don't want to see the progress we've made on access to addiction treatment fade away. I

don't want to see rural hospitals shut their doors and people lose their access to the care they depend on.

Ohio has some of the best health care and research institutions in the country, yet thousands of Ohioans are unable to afford or access the services they need. Without our state and federal governments' investments, this will only get worse as services and jobs will be lost. Students like me will be incentivized to leave Ohio to pursue training and jobs in states which invest in health care, and the inequalities we see in rural areas will only get worse.

Health is a human right. Providing health coverage through the Medicaid expansion in 2014 was an appropriate moral and financial decision for Ohio's well-being. **Instead of jumping to slash our Ohio Medicaid, I'd love to see our legislators taking action to encourage federal lawmakers to oppose federal funding cuts.**

I ask you to consider my testimony and remove these two alarming items from Ohio's operating budget. By doing so, you would protect the thousands of patients who rely on these services.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Ellena Privitera

#### References-

2018 Ohio Medicaid Report:

<http://medicaid.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Resources/Reports/Annual/Group-VIII-Final-Report.pdf>