

Maria A. Matzik  
House Medicaid  
Interested Party Testimony

March 5, 2025

Chairperson Gross, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Baker, and members of the House Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on the proposed 26-27 Medicaid Budget.

My name is Maria Matzik, and I am the host of the Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee. The Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee was formed in 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities. The focus of the committee is to create an active space for advocates to work together to develop and create community awareness and change in the communities that we live, work and participate in. The goal of this committee is to establish relationships with local and state officials as well as to partner with community organizations around disability related issues.

Breaking Silences is testifying today to discuss the impact that potential cuts to the state's Medicaid program will have on Ohioans, particularly in the critical area of home and community-based services (HCBS). If federal Medicaid cuts occur, it will devastate Ohioans who rely on these services, especially individuals with disabilities who depend on home and community-based services as their lifeline to independence.

According to the Department of Medicaid's website: ODM delivers health care coverage to more than 3 million residents of Ohio on a daily basis. Working closely with stakeholders, advocates, medical professionals, and fellow state agencies, the agency continues to find new ways to modernize Medicaid in Ohio. ODM is committed to serving Ohio's taxpayers and families.

It is important to understand and remember that Medicaid is not just a program, but it is a vital source of care for families, older adults, people with disabilities, and those in need of comprehensive health services.

The proposed federal House Budget Resolution calls for a minimum of \$880 billion in cuts to Medicaid. These reductions are not hypothetical, but can only be achieved by drastically weakening the program and stripping away the essential services that so many rely on.

Keeping Medicaid intact is essential not only for maintaining the quality of life for Ohioans but also for saving money in the long run by ensuring more effective, accessible, and preventive healthcare.

Ohio's Medicaid program supports more than 3 million people, with a large portion of those individuals depending on HCBS to live independently and avoid institutional care. These

services are not a luxury; they are a necessary support system that ensures dignity, autonomy, independence, and quality of life.

The threat of drastic cuts to Medicaid at the federal level could lead to devastating reductions in HCBS programs. These cuts would jeopardize the ability of individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes, participate fully in society, and lead productive lives. In addition, these cuts may reduce, if not eliminate, individuals with disabilities' ability to continue to work. The impact of these cuts would be felt by families, caregivers, and the entire community.

By protecting and supporting the state's Medicaid program, Ohio will continue to maintain:

**Independence and Quality of Life:** For individuals with disabilities, in-home services and supports enable people to live independently, manage their daily activities, and stay connected to their communities. Without access to Medicaid-funded HCBS, many individuals would face forced institutionalization, which strips away their autonomy and ability to work and live with dignity.

**Cost Savings for Ohio:** Providing home and community-based services is far more cost-effective than institutional care. When individuals can access HCBS, the need for more expensive nursing home care or hospitalization is reduced. Studies have consistently shown that Medicaid-funded HCBS saves states money in the long run by preventing the high costs of institutional care. Medicaid is a cost-efficient way to meet the needs of people with disabilities, while also providing them with the independence and community integration that improve their overall health and quality of life.

**Supporting Family Caregivers:** Many individuals with disabilities rely on family caregivers to assist with their daily needs. Medicaid's support for home-based services helps alleviate the financial and emotional strain placed on family members who are providing care. Without Medicaid, families could face overwhelming financial hardship and may be forced to choose between their own financial well-being and providing the necessary care to their loved ones causing unnecessary institutionalization. HCBS helps reduce this strain and allows family caregivers to continue their vital roles without jeopardizing their own health or livelihoods.

**The Economic Impact of Medicaid:** Medicaid is not only essential for healthcare but also a key driver of Ohio's economy. By protecting Medicaid, we ensure that people with disabilities can remain in the workforce, contribute to their communities, and continue to participate in the economy. Medicaid also supports local healthcare providers and home care agencies that employ thousands of Ohioans. A reduction in Medicaid funding would have a ripple effect, leading to job losses, economic downturns in local communities, and greater strain on the healthcare system.

**Ensuring Access to Care:** In-home services are an essential part of Medicaid's comprehensive care system. For individuals with disabilities, these services are vital to managing health

conditions and accessing routine healthcare. If cuts to Medicaid result in the loss of these services, many Ohioans will face barriers to essential care. The result will be poorer health outcomes and increased reliance on more expensive care options, which could overwhelm Ohio's healthcare infrastructure.

In short, Medicaid is not only an investment in the health and well-being of Ohioans, but it is also a strategic move that saves money. By focusing on preventive care, reducing emergency healthcare costs, and supporting families and communities, Medicaid enables a healthier, more productive population while lowering overall healthcare expenses.

For millions of Americans with disabilities, access to Medicaid is a matter of life, death, and independence. We cannot afford to let this essential program be weakened. The stakes are high for Ohioans who rely on Medicaid and home and community-based services. These services are not just a support system, but are the key to maintaining independence, dignity, and a high quality of life for people with disabilities. Medicaid's ability to provide these services is critical, not only for individuals but also for families and Ohio's broader community. Ohio must prioritize Medicaid funding in the state's biennium budget.

Respectfully,

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