

Robert Lohmeyer
House Medicaid Committee

March 5, 2025

Interested Party, HB 96

Thank you Chair Gross, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Baker, and members of the House Medicaid Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 96. My name is Robert Lohmeyer and I am a Blind senior that benefited from having a Personal Care Assistant who regularly came to my home to assist me with tasks of daily living. I had an individual who came to my home about 12 hours a week to assist with me with tasks like opening my mail, fill out forms, take me to different appointments, and other daily tasks that I trusted. At the end of the month, I will lose this service. I am greatly concerned with how I will manage certain tasks and do not want to lose my independence.

Medicare in Ohio should be expanded to include long term care services and supports.

Currently, Medicaid is the only payer of long-term support and services that provide in-home care providers. Medicare only covers in-home providers for a short period of time. With stricter Medicaid and Medicare requirements, many aging Ohioans will lose care and the opportunity to age in their community of choice. Ohio is a quickly aging state and has an obligation to ensure that home and community-based services are adequately funded, and individuals have access to receive the supports and services in their most integrated setting. This includes adequately funding programs that benefit all people with disabilities, not those who meet strict requirements. **Ohio should ensure that aging Ohioans and Ohioans with disabilities have access to care and services to meet their needs.**

Ohio should expand the ABLE program to allow individuals who were disabled prior to program implementation the opportunity to apply.

To qualify for an ABLE account, an individual must be disabled before the age of 26—I was 21. I spent decades saving and now have too many assets to qualify for the program. Since many disabled individuals are unaware that this program exists or had to find other ways to survive prior to program implementation, they are often penalized for needing services because of having too many assets. Currently, there is a \$2,000 asset limit which may affect someone's eligibility if they go over that amount. Ohio should allow for individuals to be 'grandfathered' into applying for the program.

Ohio is still in a caregiving crisis and with impending cuts and funding decreases, Ohio is at risk of accruing a costly bill.

Direct Care Workers is an umbrella term that speaks to an individual who provides in-home services and supports. Each service system and program has a different title; however, their work is similar. Without adequately funding programs that support DeafBlind, aging, and disabled Ohioans, the state would accrue a costly bill if individuals were unable to live in their community, go to work,

socialize, and participate in all aspects of life as their peers without disabilities. Individuals would be forced into institutions that would require state payment. Ohio must ensure adequate funding for care providers, funding for programs that help DeafBlind individuals like the SSP Program, and the Independent Living Older Blind Program. As a blind advocate with hearing loss, I am greatly concerned with what will happen when my services are cut off. We all want Ohio to be a state that individuals, regardless of disability, see as a place to raise their children, age, and find meaningful employment.

Thank you for opportunity to testify on HB 96, please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert Lohmeyer

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