

Committees:
Children & Human Services
Medicaid
Small Business



Contact Information:
Office: (614) 644-6030
Email: repll@ohiohouse.gov
77 S. High Street, 10th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Representative Crystal Lett
The Ohio House of Representatives

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Chair Gross, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Baker, and members of the Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 552, which I'm proud to co-sponsor with Representative Pizzulli.

This bill is simple, but profoundly important. It ensures that hospice providers in Ohio are fairly reimbursed when caring for Medicaid patients in nursing facilities and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Right now, Medicaid only reimburses 95% of the room and board rate for these patients. The remaining 5% isn't covered by anyone - not the state, not the patient, and not the facility. The hospice provider must absorb it. Every single day, for every single patient.

A few years ago, when I was speaking with a hospice nurse who was taking care of my own grandfather, she said something that has stayed with me ever since. She told me, *"It's hard getting into this world, and it's hard getting out of it."*

She was talking about what it means to stand beside people as they leave this life - to hold their hands, to comfort families, to ease pain when time is fleeting. These caregivers show up with compassion, grace, and strength in the moments that matter most. Yet they do this work while being underpaid, stretched thin, and losing money because of an outdated reimbursement policy.

That 5% gap may look small on paper, but it's not small to hospice programs struggling to keep their doors open. It's not small to the families who count on hospice to bring dignity, peace, and comfort to their loved ones in their final days.

House Bill 552 closes that gap. It directs the Ohio Department of Medicaid to ensure hospice providers are reimbursed 100% of the facility's rate for room and board. It's a modest change that makes a meaningful difference - ensuring sustainability for hospice programs and protecting access to compassionate end-of-life care for Ohioans across our state.

This bill honors the people who make sure that, in those hardest final moments, no one leaves this world alone or in pain.

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I respectfully urge your support for House Bill 552.

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for your time and consideration.