



May 28, 2025

**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony on Sub. HB 96**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance committee, thank you for your time today to share our perspective on the state budget, substitute HB 96. My name is Tara Britton and I'm the Director of Public Policy at The Center for Community Solutions, an independent, nonpartisan policy and research center dedicated to delivering practical, data-driven solutions focused on improving health, social and economic conditions for Ohioans.

We recognize the enormous task you all have embarked on, ensuring that public dollars are meeting the needs of Ohioans within the confines of a balanced budget. Our testimony focuses on the key changes we are requesting that build upon the goals of a more effective, efficient and responsive budget document that addresses pressing needs of Ohioans.

Medicaid trigger language

As members of the Ohio Medicaid Matters coalition we join our partners in asking for a change to the so-called "trigger" language which would mean an immediate end to the Medicaid expansion in Ohio if the federal government adjusts its share of the costs. **We are asking that the Senate change the legislative language from "shall" end the expansion to "may" end the expansion and allow the General Assembly the flexibility to address federal policy changes as they come in a way that best meets the needs of Ohioans.**

Continuous Medicaid coverage for young children

In 2023, the Ohio General Assembly made a commitment to the youngest Ohioans by enacting House Bill 33. House Bill 33 (ORC Section 5155.45) required the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to submit a Section 1115 waiver demonstration to provide continuous Medicaid coverage for children aged zero until their fourth birthday. The current version of HB 96 removes the continuous coverage provision. Continuous coverage for young children would strengthen support for families by eliminating the risk of losing coverage during a child's first four years. This is an especially important period that can have a lifelong impact for many children. **We ask that continuous coverage for young kids be restored in the Senate budget.**

Medicaid Reimbursement for Doulas

In 2023, the state budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 enabled doulas to seek Medicaid reimbursement throughout Ohio. This became a permanent program, and doulas started to reimburse Medicaid in the fall of 2024. The House passed budget proposes limiting Medicaid reimbursement for doulas to only the six counties with the highest infant deaths which would prevent access for individuals needing doula services in other counties. **We ask that the Senate remove the provision that would limit Medicaid coverage of doulas to only six counties, so doulas can be a part of the solution to improving maternal and infant health statewide.**

Food assistance

The House budget included a provision that would implement cumbersome and bureaucratic requirements in the SNAP program. A provision known as “change reporting” would require working people who are receiving SNAP benefits to report even small changes in income (changes that impact eligibility are already required) on a more frequent basis, disincentivizing someone to take a raise or more hours at their job and further exacerbating the benefits cliff. **We ask that the Senate remove the change reporting requirement in its version of the budget.**

Harm reduction

The only dedicated funding for harm reduction in the state budget was reduced from \$500,000 to \$315,231 in the House budget. **We ask that funding levels be restored to the Governor’s proposed level (\$500,000).**

Lead poisoning prevention

The House made significant changes that would be detrimental for children across Ohio as it relates to reducing exposure to lead poisoning. The House substantially reduced the lead abatement funding. This reduction impacts the ability for local governments to improve housing quality for Ohioans. And the House eliminated funding for the lead-safe home fund, hollowing out lead prevention and remediation efforts supported by state dollars. Children across the state could risk continuous exposure in their homes without proper mitigation. **Community Solutions supports the work of the Lead-Free Kids Coalition and the Coalition’s asks to restore this funding to the Governor’s introduced budget.**

Infant/children’s health

Earmarks for Infant Vitality funding were reduced to \$6 million dollars for each fiscal year in the House passed budget. Cuts to funding would limit the amount of services community- and faith-based- service providers can offer to parents. Furthermore, the number of parents being served will decrease throughout the state. Funding for Help Me Grow, an evidence-based parent support program, was also reduced to \$63 million for FY 2027. Similar to Infant Vitality, reducing funding for Help Me Grow will limit the reach professionals can have when helping parents. **We ask that the Senate restore funding for Infant Vitality by appropriating the funds to \$7.5 million dollars each fiscal year, which was originally earmarked for faith-based- and community- service providers. In addition, please restore Help Me Grow funding to \$85,521,869 for FY 2027.**

Conclusion

Community Solutions’ mission is to improve health, social and economic conditions, which span several issues and thus, several state agencies, so we appreciate the committee’s attention today to an array of health and human services priorities. There are major changes to both housing and food access which we are working in partnership to help address. We support the work to restore the Ohio Housing Trust Fund and increase funding to our foodbanks. I, and others on our knowledgeable team at Community Solutions, would be happy to answer any questions via tbritton@communitysolutions.com. Thank you!