



Dustin Holfinger
American Heart Association
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Sub. HB 96 – Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Minority Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the American Heart Association regarding substitute HB 96 - the state Operating Budget. I am Dustin Holfinger, the State Government Relations Director for the American Heart Association (AHA). The AHA is a non-profit organization that funds cardiovascular medical research, educates consumers on healthy living, and fosters appropriate cardiac care to reduce disability and deaths caused by cardiovascular disease and stroke. Our organization is looking forward to working with this legislature chamber to advance our mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives and build a healthier Ohio. That process begins with all of us, as individuals and elected officials, taking a moment to consider which policies and programs will best help Ohioans.

I am here today to respectfully request your consideration of support for a couple of amendments and reinsertion of language for inclusion in the final House version of HB 96.

1. We ask you to consider reinserting the Vapor Retailer Registry program (3701.842). This registry is crucial for enforcing already-enacted language from [HB 258](#), which targets retailers selling to underage Ohioans, by enabling compliance checks and ensuring retailer accountability.

AMENDMENT – SC0310

2. We ask this chamber to consider funding the Tobacco Use Prevention Fund at the governor's proposed \$10M/year. This fund is vitally important for continued efforts to further decrease the state's smoking rate, which is perpetually in the top 10, and provides sound opportunities for Ohioans looking to quit the nicotine addiction. This money does not stay within ODH but rather is used for local health department grant opportunities to maintain localized cessation programs and services.

AMENDMENT – SC0391 (holds harmless)

3. In the House version, they appropriated \$1M/year to the [Produce Perks program](#) via sub. HB 96, which provides a \$1-\$1 match for all SNAP participants in the state to use at participating farmers markets and independent grocers. While we certainly appreciate this inclusion to ensure they can continue, we also know that Produce Perks can only partner with as many retailers as their funding allows, as such the AHA would ask that the Senate add another \$1M/year to allow Produce Perks the ability to expand their partnerships across the state.

AMENDMENT – SC0430

4. Additionally, we strongly advocate for continued funding of the [CPR training requirement in all Ohio schools](#). Not only will it ensure that over 100,000 students are trained in this life-saving skill, but it is also critical to improving Ohio's bystander CPR rate, currently ranked 3rd lowest in the nation at 30%, and ensures over 100,000 students are trained in life-saving skills. We request an appropriation of \$606,800/year to provide schools with the necessary resources for compliance. In the previous budget bill, HB 33, the legislature appropriated \$598,000/year, but after working with the ODEW, we realized considerably less schools had any resources, and an additional round of funding is needed to complete the curriculum requirement.

AMENDMENT – SC0136

5. We also request your support for the Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival ([OH CARES](#)). This registry, which collects vital data from EMS agencies on cardiac arrest cases, enables the Ohio Department of Public Safety and EMS to improve protocols and survival rates. Currently, OH CARES operates on a mere \$25,000 in donations and is requesting \$500,000/year to be fully operational.

AMENDMENT – SC0137

6. Lastly, the American Heart Association is part of Ohio Medicaid Matters, a coalition of more than 80 organizations, including the state's leading human services agencies, health advocacy associations and hospital systems. We believe Medicaid is foundational to Ohio's economic success, and we want as many Ohioans as possible to have the health care they need to work and thrive.

As currently proposed, "shall" trigger language in HB 96 would immediately discontinue medical assistance for the 770,000 Ohioans in the Medicaid expansion group if federal funding dips below 90%. Ohio Medicaid Matters is asking lawmakers to enable flexibility and change the trigger language from "shall" to "may."

AMENDMENT – SC1883

We recognize the fiscal constraints facing the state and understand that not all priorities can be accommodated. However, we believe the requests herein are prudent yet very impactful for the health of the State.

For the knowledge of the Committee, I wanted to make you aware of some recent action in Indiana. The Hoosier state, via their state budget, just added a \$2.00/pack increase, putting their current rate at \$2.99/pack. This is above Pennsylvania (\$2.60), Michigan (\$2.00), and Ohio (\$1.60). If the State is interested in additional revenue for additional projects and services, the Association would recommend reconsideration of Governor DeWine's proposed excise tax increase of \$1.50/pack. Studies have shown that individual increases of at least \$1.00/pack have the potential to decrease a state's smoking rate by as much as 5%. In addition, creating tax parity between traditional cigarettes and OTP (other tobacco products) will close the "cheap entry level products" gap and place all these dangerous and addictive products on the same tax plane. The Governor's proposal for parity included raising the OTP rate from 17%, a rate that has not been altered since 1993, to 42%. Again, this would create parity with his proposed cigarette rate increase from \$1.60/pack to \$3.10/pack.

We thank you for this opportunity and if any additional information is required as you consider these requests, please do not hesitate to reach out for additional information or further discussion.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D.A. Holfinger", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dustin A. Holfinger
State Government Relations Director,
American Heart Association