

Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez and Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, my name is Che Gadison and I represent Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality/NOBLE. NOBLE is a coalition of organizations and individuals whose mission is to bring the voices of low-income Ohioans to the State Biennium Budget process.

We are here today in support of continued full funding for Medicaid.

Medicaid saves the lives of thousands of children and adults as well as makes it possible for people to continue working as they struggle with chronic illnesses. Over three (3) million of our fellow citizens receive Medicaid in the State and 770,000 of them receive Medicaid Expansion. I am a recipient of Medicaid Expansion myself.

We ask that you protect Medicaid Expansion by not including “trigger” language in your version of the budget. As currently worded, this would end health care coverage for the 770,000 Ohioans immediately after the Federal Budget is passed with any reduction in reimbursement for this program.

To illustrate the importance of Medicaid Expansion I would like to tell you the stories of two of our members.

- 1) Terelawanda is 55 years old and until 2020 had been consistently employed since she was 16 years old when she then worked at McDonalds. In 2020 she was employed as a program coordinator for the after-school programs at Friendly Inn Settlement House and Sarah Harper Recreation Centers in Cleveland until she was laid off due to COVID restrictions. Soon after she contracted COVID herself and became extremely ill. She had an extended stay in the hospital followed by ongoing rehabilitation and home care.

She is working herself back to a fairly healthy state where she can become employed again soon, which she is very anxious to do. The progress she has made has been substantially due to the health care and health care resources that she has received through Medicaid Expansion. This has included medications, oxygen, doctor visits, therapies, home care, and medical equipment.

Having health care through Medicaid Expansion has made her life sustainable again.

2) Cheryl has fibromyalgia scleroderma. This is a chronic condition that causes her widespread pain, and fatigue, along with problems with other organs in her body. She also has consistent very high blood pressure.

Having Medicaid Expansion health insurance has been a life saver for her. It has enabled her to have regular doctor visits and receive critical medications and various therapies, including behavioral health therapies to manage her chronic pain.

Without Medicaid Expansion health coverage, it would be very difficult for her to live day to day. As a result of having Medicaid Expansion and being able to manage her pain, she has generally been able to be gainfully employed consistently.

Their stories are but two examples of why it is so critical that that we must remove the “trigger language” in the state budget so that we can ensure that single adults without dependent children can continue to have health care coverage.