



## **Advocates for Ohio's Future**

Testimony to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Interested Party

Substitute HB 96, Main Operating Budget FY2026-FY2027

June 6, 2025

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Substitute House Bill 96. My name is Sarah Hudacek and I am the Coalition Manager of Advocates for Ohio's Future. Advocates for Ohio's Future (AOF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of state and local health and human services policy, advocacy and provider organizations that strive to strengthen families and communities through health, human services, and early care & education.

### **Preserve Funding for Local Services - Property Taxes**

A number of vital local services are funded through local levies. Public Children Service Agencies, Area Agencies on Aging, County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, Alcohol, Drug Addition, and Mental Health Boards, Job and Family Services, emergency response, health departments, and more are all able to ask voters for property tax support.

In the Senate substitute bill, a provision was added to allow county budget commissions to go against the will of the voters and reduce the millage on any voter-approved property tax levy. This provision is similar to House Bill 309, which was introduced just a week before the Senate substitute bill was accepted by the Finance Committee.

Because health and human services are funded through a partnership between state appropriations and community designated funding, any changes to funding for these services must be considered holistically. Cutting off one part of the equation without adapting it on the other side would affect the availability of local services.

With so few days remaining in the current budget process, there is not enough time to meaningfully engage with stakeholders on the impacts of this change, which could severely undercut the health and human services system in Ohio. AOF asks that this provision be removed from the budget in the omnibus, so that the standalone bill can move through the legislative process with a robust public testimony discussion.

### **Protect Health Coverage for Working Ohioans - Medicaid**

Advocates for Ohio's Future is also part of Ohio Medicaid Matters, a coalition of more than 110

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.

With the Medicaid expansion trigger language remaining intact in the Senate substitute budget, Ohio Medicaid Matters is asking the Senate to consider an amendment to ensure an orderly transition process for removing the 770,000 Ohioans who are enrolled in Medicaid expansion from that coverage if the federal government does indeed lower the assistance rate.

OMM is asking the Ohio Senate for a formalized process to set expectations and timelines that give Ohioans time and resources to attempt to find alternative ways to access care, including their life-saving medications. The coalition respectfully requests that the Senate:

- **Remove the word “immediately”** from the trigger clause to prevent abrupt discontinuation of medical assistance, which could leave individuals uninsured and without access to necessary care.
- **Revise the language** to stipulate that if the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) changes, Group VIII eligibility will be terminated after the Ohio Department of Medicaid Director has submitted the necessary state plan amendment and received federal approval to end coverage **OR** after 120 days, whichever is shorter. This approach allows for a measured response to funding changes.
- **Require the Ohio Department of Medicaid Director** to submit a comprehensive transition plan within 30 days. This plan should include:
  - Notification procedures for impacted recipients and providers.
  - Information on alternative insurance coverage options and assistance programs.
  - Defined roles for Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), county departments of Job and Family Services, ombuds programs and other stakeholders in supporting individuals through the transition, including assistance with continuing care and applications for disability or other Medicaid coverage options.

While many Ohioans on Medicaid expansion will not be eligible to access alternative coverage no matter the timeline or off-ramp, implementing an amendment with these provisions will balance the state's fiscal responsibility, provide as many safeguards as possible against coverage gaps and work to ensure that Ohioans receive the support they need during transitions in their healthcare coverage.

Thank you to the committee for your diligence throughout this budget process and for the opportunity to share this testimony.

**Advocates for Ohio's Future**  
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