

HB96

Interested party testimony

Maria Sutter

Peer Support and Advocacy Specialist at Linking Employment Abilities and Potential (LEAP)

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB96, Ohio's proposed budget. My name is Maria Sutter, and I serve as the Peer Support and Advocacy Specialist at Linking Employment Abilities and Potential (LEAP).

Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP) is an agent of positive change, working to advance participation and equality in society for people with disabilities in Northeast Ohio. LEAP's mission is to advance a society of equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of disability.

Safeguard Medicaid for family caregivers and those they care for

As a representative for many individuals in the northeast Ohio area, I serve families who rely on Group VIII Medicaid. Many of these families have a family member with a disability and an additional family member who is caring for them. In these scenarios, it is the caregiver who will be hit hardest if Medicaid is cut. If the "trigger" provision in HB96 that automatically ends Medicaid expansion if the federal match is reduced remains in the bill, many caregivers will lose their health insurance. If this takes effect, caregivers will be forced to allocate dollars for insurance that they do not have. They may also have to switch to jobs outside the home and no longer care for their family members with disabilities. These family members with disabilities may be forced to leave the community setting they are accustomed to living in and be relocated to institutional living. In these instances, the state would experience greater financial responsibility to care for individuals in institutions, incurring an annual national median cost of \$127, 750 in 2024, compared to \$77, 792 annually for full time staffing of in-home care¹ for each Medicaid resident.

I ask this committee to **soften the language** to allow individuals relying on Group VIII Medicaid to continue to receive services, which will also afford the legislature the opportunity to consider available options, find alternative funding solutions, and make changes gradually that are

¹ Genworth Financial, Cost of Care Survey 2024, <https://assets.carescout.com/55da049c1f/282102.pdf>, accessed 03/07/2025.

paramount for the health and welfare of thousands of Ohioans. An all or nothing methodology is not the only reaction to the harsh federal cuts being proposed.

Reinstate the \$20,000 Unearned Income for Medicaid Buy-In for Workers With Disabilities Provision

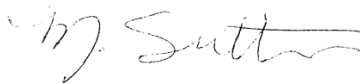
The House version of the budget included a provision that allowed workers with disabilities receiving Medicaid through Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities (MBIWD) to disregard \$20,000 of their unearned income when determining benefits. Individuals with disabilities face many challenges to successful employment that their non-disabled colleagues never worry about. Assistance with activities of daily living, the need for medical supplies, and reliance on assistive equipment are just a few examples. Meeting complex care needs is integral for successful employment but is also prohibitively expensive. For many workers with disabilities, Medicaid waivers help provide these services. Unfortunately, to remain qualified for these waivers, there are very restrictive asset limits. The \$20,000 unearned income provision goes a long way to help individuals with disabilities keep Medicaid benefits, remain in the workforce, pay taxes, and contribute to Ohio's economic success.

Conclusion

As the Peer Support and Advocacy Specialist at LEAP, I speak with northeast Ohio seniors and individuals with disabilities who fear being without healthcare services, losing programs that allow them to be active community members, and for the future of their families. These individuals are your constituents and your motivation to pass a budget that is fiscally responsible and addresses their paramount concern to keep Ohioans healthy. Including language in the budget that does not abandon Ohioans at the drop of a hat when federal funding changes, as well as reinstating a provision that supports successful employment are two measures this committee can take while still exercising shrewd economic responsibility.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB96. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns at msutter@leapinfo.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Sutter".

Maria Sutter

Peer Support and Advocacy Specialist

Linking Employment, Abilities, and Potential (LEAP)