

Testimony on Sub House Bill 96

By Grace Class-Colon

May 6, 2025

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story today. My name is Grace Class-Colon and I am a parent advocate from Butler County, Ohio.

In 2015, my husband and I arrived in Ohio from Puerto Rico with just a suitcase and a dream of building a better future. We worked hard to establish our life here, and in 2018, we received an incredible surprise—I was pregnant with twins. What began as an exciting chapter quickly turned frightening, as I was diagnosed with a high-risk pregnancy. At just 23 weeks, I went into preterm labor and required an emergency C-section.

Our twin girls were born extremely premature, each weighing barely over a pound and both suffering from significant brain trauma. I had to immediately stop working, and although I had access to FMLA, I quickly realized I couldn't return to my job under these circumstances.

We applied for Medicaid, and it became a lifeline. It provided critical coverage for my daughters' extensive and costly medical care. Sadly, after just 11 days, one of our daughters passed away. Our surviving daughter was transferred to Dayton Children's Hospital, where she remained for nearly 150 days. Her journey included multiple surgeries, treatments, and a growing list of diagnoses.

After discharge, our fight for her health continued. Weekly therapy sessions, specialist visits, medications, feeding and incontinence supplies, and medical equipment became part of our daily routine. And through it all, Medicaid ensured that she could access the comprehensive care she needed—not just to survive, but to thrive.

Today, my daughter is nearly seven years old. She's joyful, resilient, and full of life. She still depends on Medicaid for ongoing care and has another surgery scheduled soon. Medicaid covers the medications, treatments, therapies, and supplies that are essential to her continued growth and development.

Because of her needs, I've remained her full-time caregiver. While that has meant sacrifices, I wouldn't have it any other way. Medicaid has ensured our family could meet her needs while providing a safe, stable, and loving home.

My daughter's journey has inspired me. I now serve as a Parent Advisor on Dayton Children's Parent Advisory Council and have worked to strengthen my own well-being—because she needs me to be healthy, too.

This has been a long and difficult road, but the support of Medicaid has allowed us to focus on what matters most: our daughter's health, happiness, and future.

That is why I join Groundwork Ohio in urging state policymakers to:

- RESTORE multi-year continuous Medicaid coverage for children ages 0–3.
- RESTORE Medicaid reimbursement of doula services to all 88 Ohio counties.
- PRESERVE and STRENGTHEN Medicaid coverage for parents and young children.

These investments are critical to ensuring that all Ohio families—especially those facing medical, financial, or personal challenges—can give their children the best possible start in life.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to Ohio's children and families.

Sincerely,

Grace Class-Colon