

**Ohio Senate
Testimony of:
Michael Cohen
Member of the Summit County Opiate Task Force – Family Education Committee
Parent of a daughter that suffers from the disease of heroin/opiate addiction
June 6, 2017**

Senate Finance Committee

My name is Michael Cohen and I am the parent of a daughter that suffers from the disease of opiate/heroin addiction and the grandparent of a two year old granddaughter that has severe physical deformities of the hands, feet and legs. Without the Medicaid expansion my daughter would have probably died in 2015 or 2016. My granddaughter may not have been part of a "special needs adoption" and would endure a life of suffering as an invalid. Today our family has hope for the future all because of the services provided through the Medicaid expansion.

Just a week before my daughter entered graduate school in social work she broke her foot and was prescribed a large amount of opiate pain relievers with too many refills. After the refills she went to heroin. She still completed her first year with a 3.84 GPA. By year two her addiction forced her to drop out of school. The journey began. While Summit County is for more equipped than most, there were waiting times for services. Heroin addiction does not wait. In 2015 someone died every 2 hours and 52 minutes in Ohio from an overdose. In 2016 there was a death every 2 hours and eleven minutes in our state. My daughter almost died three times. On occasion it took six doses of Narcan to revive her. She has since utilized all of the detox, rehabilitation, mental health, counseling, and medical assisted treatments available in our county. Today she celebrates 15 months and 18 days of sobriety and will enter the University of Akron in the fall to complete her Master's degree.

In the end my daughter Leah is alive today because of the Affordable Care Act. She has access to Medicaid under the Medicaid expansion and is therefore able to receive the Vivitrol shot which blocks opiate receptors in the brain. This shot saved Leah's life. Of the recipients of Vivitrol in Ohio 92% get this shot through Medicaid. Stop Medicaid expansion and the death toll will skyrocket further in our state. My daughter has access to mental health counseling and gets her medication because of Medicaid expansion and the ACA.

My granddaughter had three major surgeries at Akron Children's Hospital in her first nine months. She was adopted by a member of our family as part of a "special needs adoption" in February of this year. This Thursday she will have surgery at Cincinnati Children's on one of her hands. She has received regular physical and occupational therapy, braces for her feet and recently a walker. Many more surgeries are planned over the years. She receives these services through Medicaid. Without Medicaid it would be impossible for her adoptive family to provide for her medical needs which will be for the rest of her life.

As a society most of us pray to a higher power. I ask you to do the 'righteous' thing for those in need.

Respectfully,
Michael N. Cohen

