

Sandy Young
HB 49 Testimony to Ohio Senate Finance Committee
June 7th, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, my name is Sandy Young. I am a mother of a son with a serious mental illness. I am also a member of the Delaware-Morrow County NAMI Affiliate. My son Scott is thirty-five and currently lives with me and my husband, Jeff. Scott was diagnosed with a dual diagnosis of Bipolar 1 and self-medicating addictions almost ten years ago. Proceeding with his care was difficult as he had no health care coverage from our employers due to his age.

After an attempt to take his own life with several days in the Intensive Care Unit and weeks in two different hospitals, we tried to get him health care coverage by applying through Social Security Disability. After three different application attempts, we were not successful due to his wanting to "work!" It is terribly unfortunate that the very thing that kept him 'purposeful' in his recovery (i.e. wanting to work) kept him from getting the health care coverage he needed to treat his serious mental illness and move forward in recovery.

For years, my husband and I struggled every month to pay for his many medications and find an affordable mental health care facility. With the help of NAMI and the Delaware County Mental Health and Recovery Board we found a facility with therapists, psychiatrists, and free samples along with a CVS Care program to reduce the cost of his medications. However, it was still expensive as we have two other children in our family.

After all this, it has been an absolute blessing that Scott was finally able to sign up for and receive health care coverage and treatment through Ohio's Medicaid expansion. Now he can get the lifelong assistance he needs! This wasn't possible before because - although he worked many jobs and has an excellent work ethic - many employers do not carry insurance for their employees and he often works just under full time status. In addition, due to their illness, folks with Bipolar disorder tend to have short term employment records with one employer that keeps them from being eligible to sign up for benefits with a particular employer. However, like so many other people with bipolar disorder, Scott continues working time and time again with numerous different jobs.

Recently, this past winter, we sent our son to Hazeldon, a Betty Ford Hospital in Minnesota, and I am proud to say that Scott is in recovery, working at Hot Chicken Takeover and is a contributing, hard working, healthy member of our community! Jeff and I made the decision to use retirement funds as a "last gasp" to help our child. This experience, expense, and commitment on the part of Ohio to expand Medicaid saved all of our lives. Please do not pull the rug out from under him by ending the Medicaid expansion. Without Medicaid expansion he will not be able to continue his recovery and wellness due to his serious mental health condition.

I am a retired teacher of 30 years and my husband is planning on retiring soon. We are prayerful that our son will stay on this road of wellness, but will need Medicaid expansion for his continued successful recovery. We have all struggled and worked together to get where he is today. Taking Medicaid expansion away from our son is life threatening to all of us and to so many suffering from chronic, serious health conditions. Thank you again for allowing me to testify before you today and to share Scott's story. I am happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.