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Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Senate Bill 17
February 24, 2021

Dear Senators Roegner, McColley, Hoagland, Lang, Schaffer, Craig and Thomas:

As we all know, the State of Ohio along with 49 other states is struggling to climb out of an economic disaster caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The economic disaster was not caused entirely by the pandemic itself, but also by policies and procedures that followed.

I am here today on behalf of the members of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE), a community organization that brings the voice of low-income people to the State's Biennium Budget process. Members of NOBLE feel strongly that SB 17 will seriously hinder the State's ability to crawl out of the economic disaster that we are facing. In addition, we find that the provisions associated with SNAP and Medicaid will have an adverse impact on our membership and many Ohioans.

As it relates to Medicaid, the proposal mandates work requirements for recipients including those that are pregnant or over the age of 65. We find this to be an unrealistic expectation as these demographics often have physical limitations preventing them from work. As it relates to Food Stamps, requiring pictures on the SNAP ID creates barriers for people who rely on others to shop for them, including the disabled and elderly.

Passing legislation that will hinder an individual's or family's ability to access food and health care benefits while they are unemployed makes no sense. People working in the service industry (waitresses/waiters, cooks, cleaners, dish washers, factory workers and many others) are not people who can work from home during COVID and are not considered essential workers. They have been laid off or their hours have been cut. They depend on SNAP, Medicaid and/or Unemployment benefits to survive. These people did not cause COVID; neither did they ask to lose their jobs.

Imagine, Senators, if a member of your family did not have enough food to feed themselves and their children or their grandchildren and had to turn to SNAP. I would think that you would not want the application experience to be full of roadblocks. Millions of Americans and thousands of Ohioans have had to turn to SNAP during the pandemic. These are people who have never had to do this before.

We as taxpayers strongly urge you to vote No on SB 17. Instead, we ask that you work to protect all who have suffered from the pandemic and the ensuing economic downfall – strengthen their access to SNAP, Medicaid and unemployment benefits. Do not pass legislation that will result in policies that will pull down rather than lift up Ohioans.

Work to protect Ohioans through actions that can be taken in HB 110. Increase the amount of money that goes to Food Banks; make sure that Medicaid insurance is protected for all eligible Ohioans; make no cuts to Public Transportation so that as people return to work, they are able to get there; increase working parents' childcare subsidy to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level; adequately fund Adult Protective Services so that all seniors living

throughout the state can feel safe and protected; and continue to protect services for citizens who suffer from addiction and mental illness.

We are living in very fragile times. Senators, if SB 17 is passed, we are afraid that safety net services will not be readily accessible and earned unemployment compensation benefits will be harder to obtain.

Thank you for hearing us,

Diana King, Co-Chair

Diane Howard, Co-Chair