

May 6, 2021
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
SB 17

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Committee,

A wise person once said “The bureaucracy is expanding to meet the needs of the expanding bureaucracy.” Senate Bill 17 is a clear example of bureaucracy for the sake of bureaucracy. Will it reduce fraud? Doubtful. Will it help people who need help? Clearly not.

So, what will this bill do? It will make things harder for those already struggling. That’s it.

My name is Barry Goldberg, I am an organizer with NOBLE. I have conversations daily with the real humans who interact with aid systems such as SNAP, Medicaid, and unemployment assistance. I have also found myself having to rely on all of them personally. And regardless of any good intentions that went into writing Senate Bill 17, the real impact would miss the mark, and miss by a lot.

Senate Bill 17 misses the reality of these programs. In an ideal world, new rules and restrictions would be implemented seamlessly, cost no money, and only hurt wrong doers. We do not live in an ideal world.

Senate Bill 17 makes two fundamental false assumptions about the real world I see every day:

1. Senate Bill 17 falsely assumes that benefits recipients are clamoring to defraud the system.
2. Senate Bill 17 falsely assumes that adding new requirements to benefits would have no effect on those not trying to defraud the system.

In reality, SNAP, Medicaid, and Unemployment help people who have been dealt a rotten hand rebuild. While there is fraud, it is a slim minority of users of the systems, and even the Jobs and Family Services employees who manage applications don’t think Senate Bill 17 would make a dent in fraud.

However, the added bureaucracy would not just be yet another prime example of wasteful government efforts, it would mean real harm to the people these systems are meant to serve. As things are, the bureaucracy is already too much. Hard working and honest Ohioans, who just need a little help, find themselves bogged down in form after form and technicality after technicality. What is the point of programs to help folks in need if applying for and maintaining access to those programs are so burdensome as to divert their energy away from life improvements like a job hunt or learning new skills? Or worse, what is the point of programs to help folks in need if applying for and maintaining access to those programs is so difficult, that those who really need help can’t get it? Senate Bill 17 would make these existing problems so much worse.

Senate Bill 17 is not based on reality. Its impacts have not been well thought out. It does not consider real and true poverty, and all the balances that come with that. It does not consider the inefficiencies that scale up with bureaucratic systems.

Senate Bill 17 should not be passed, amended, or modified. It is not salvageable. The whole thing should be crumpled up and thrown in the trash. It missed. It failed any stated objectives. It’s time to go back to the drawing board. We need to serve people, not bureaucracy. Please, vote no on Senate Bill 17.

Thank you for your consideration.