

May 6, 2021

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

SB 17

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

My name is Larry Rodriguez, I am a member of NOBLE. NOBLE is a coalition of individuals and organizations advocating for ourselves and others who are consumers of State Health and Human Services programs. Our coalition consists of many folks that are low-income citizens and most impacted by cuts or negative changes at the State, Local, and Federal levels to such programs as Medicaid and SNAP, just to name a few. Today I come before you in response to the proposed SB17. At the onset of the pandemic, I lost my job at Susie Soups in Cleveland Ohio. Given that I am legally blind and have several disabilities finding gainful employment during a global pandemic has been challenging to say the least. As I currently have no income, the SNAP benefits that I receive have been life saving. While I am mostly independent, I often rely on others in my household when it comes to complicated tasks such as grocery shopping. SB17 if enacted would require for my picture to be placed on my EBT card. I find the proposed requirement to be problematic, especially for people like me that rely on others for grocery shopping. While in theory I would be exempted from this requirement, I have doubts it would work well in practice. Grocery clerks are not trained in the intricacies of the law, and might still turn away someone shopping on my behalf even with the proper paperwork in place. Additionally, there are many people with undocumented disabilities who like me often rely on others to go grocery shopping, and a new barrier to food in addition to existing barriers on healthcare could be devastating. I believe that this should not be enacted, and folks who need food assistance should be able to get it without hassle.

It is troubling to me that additional barriers to people's ability to access food are being proposed in the middle of a pandemic. 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. Thank you!