



**Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
May 6, 2021  
Opponent Testimony – SB 17  
Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Executive**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 17.

As you are aware, Summit County's Department of Job and Family Services (SCDJFS), operating under my office's purview, administers several programs on behalf of the State of Ohio, including Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Working with an array of local partners, SCDJFS provides social and career-development services to better the lives of our entire community.

In March 2021, 141,426 county residents received Medicaid benefits and 79,703 county residents received SNAP benefits. During this time, Medicaid enrollment rose by 13% and SNAP enrollment rose by 14% compared to March 2020, undoubtedly due to the continued economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am concerned that Senate Bill 17 will create barriers for residents in need of critical benefits and will increase SCDJFS administrative responsibilities, placing a financial burden on our county budget and coinciding with a once in a century pandemic that has upended our local economy and the lives of our residents.

The bill's proposed removal of categorical eligibility for SNAP will increase administrative work and introduce duplicative work for our staff. Of the tens of thousands of current SNAP recipients, we expect a large portion of those recipients would require additional casework and review by our staff due to the elimination of categorical eligibility. The current level of funding provided by the state for our operations would not cover the cost of this increased workload. Similarly, the bill doubles the required frequency of Medicaid eligibility determination. It follows that this provision will double administrative work while providing no additional funding to cover increased costs. This provision will place a financial burden on SCDJFS and may cause delays or lapses in coverage for residents who already meet all eligibility requirements.

I am concerned about the bill's provisions related to SNAP fraud prevention. The program currently requires a multi-step application and verification process to prevent fraudulent use of benefits. The inclusion of a photo ID requirement as proposed in Senate Bill 17, meant to further prevent fraud, may cause undue hardship on SNAP recipients attempting to use their benefits and increase program costs. Such a provision cannot be legally enforced under federal requirements and use of a photo ID in other states has not improved program integrity. The State of Maine discontinued its use of SNAP photo IDs in 2019 citing hardship for SNAP recipients and a lack of evidence for fraud reduction. Further, because EBT cards are provided to a household, not individuals, the proposed requirement in Senate Bill 17 may lead to additional costs, not savings, due to a need to provide additional EBT cards to multiple household members.

Senate Bill 17 also raises the exemption age for work requirements as part of the Medicaid expansion eligibility group from 55 to 65. While we are not able to assess how many Summit County Medicaid recipients would lose

benefits under this provision of the bill, there are several thousand recipients in this age category and we are certain a portion of them would become ineligible, possibly leading to health challenges for these individuals. Additionally, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently notified the state Department of Medicaid that it intends to reassess Ohio's 1115 Demonstration Waiver to permit work and community engagement requirements. If CMS withdraws state authority for current work requirements, it is unlikely to approve the new waiver proposed in Senate Bill 17.

My final concern is about the bill's proposed integration of the SNAP and child support programs. Such an integration is not currently possible due to technological constraints. Without costly system changes, the provision would require additional manual processes, leading to increased administrative work and costs.

Summit County and SCDJFS stand ready to work with the State of Ohio and the General Assembly to examine program reforms that benefit our community. I urge you, however, to reject Senate Bill 17. This bill does not offer comprehensive reform. Instead, it would unnecessarily increase administrative work without any additional funding for county agencies. The bill may also cause harm to vulnerable families and individuals in the midst of a public health emergency and unprecedented economic hardship.