



Representative Thomas West, *49<sup>th</sup> House District*

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and fellow members of the House Health Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 408.

HB 408 To enact section 5.22108 of the Revised Code to create Health Insurance Participation Week.

The week prior to the Affordable Care Act open enrollment deadline shall be designated as "Health Insurance Participation Week". This serves to inform members of the public on the benefits of having health insurance and to encourage members of the public without insurance to purchase coverage through the Ohio health insurance marketplace, or any successor entity. As we know, there is a vast sea of information out there about health insurance, and because of this we believe it necessary to facilitate the acquisition of that information by drawing awareness to the importance of insurance and how to obtain it.

I would like to share with you some of my personal experience to make clearer the subject matter. During my past years as a behavioral health provider, medical case manager working with individuals with HIV and my recent past of being a Certified Application Counselor. I've seen firsthand how individuals and families were not involved and unaware of healthcare options in the industry. I can recall when an older woman diagnosed with cancer came into my office without insurance and was seeking assistance in applying for the affordable care act. When completing the application this woman gave me a big hug as though I gave her a million dollars. The fact that she could have a primary physician for the first time and receive affordable healthcare was much larger.... It was life. This woman was informed by our outreach and awareness campaign to get people insured.

Last week the State of Ohio Employees received a reminder of Open Enrollment, which guarantees a choice of providers. Individuals across the State of Ohio may not have the same prompting. Let's admit it, insurance is not sexy! We access it when we need it. Therefore, in order to have a healthier Ohio. This week will provide the marketing and education that we need to enroll or advise the public to get insurance and become insured.