Chairperson Brinkman, Vice Chair Henne, and Ranking Member Boccieri, thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of HB 440, the Ohio Health Security Act. I want to let you know about my brother’s experience dealing with health insurance before Obama care was passed.

My brother worked all his adult life, and he was very fit for a 60 year old, but he could not afford health insurance due to the strange symptoms that came and went a few times since he was 30. We came to learn that the temporary loss of control of his hand muscles, the occasional double vision, and his sometimes difficulty walking were because he had a slow growing brain tumor that was likely present prenatally. All those episodes of going to the doctor for these odd symptoms caused him to have a pre-existing condition and because of that the cost of health insurance for him was exorbitant. He was a computer troubleshooter when his health problems began but he was not able to continue in that field due to problems learning and processing information because of the tumor. So he worked as a handyman and property caretaker the rest of his life. I tell you this so you know that even when people are handicapped they usually try plan B, C and even D. Even so, that does not guarantee them the dignity of healthcare when they need it.

All along from age 30 to 60, my brother did not get proper healthcare. No doctor did extensive tests to find out what was causing his symptoms. He was diagnosed with a stroke, and later an aneurysm but the doctors knew they were not sure what was wrong. But with no health insurance his doctors did not treat him thoroughly. When he was about 60, he collapsed on his porch. His neighbor called an ambulance which took him to a small medical center instead of a hospital since he had no medical insurance. From there he was sent back home. His girlfriend called my other brother who rushed to Colorado from California to help. He got him back to the medical center where the doc ordered a brain x-ray and diagnosed him with a stroke and prescribed medicine. He was sent home and I came out from Cleveland to stay with him. But after a couple of weeks, instead of getting better he got worse. I called the doc who advised me to take him for an MRI immediately. He hadn’t order it initially because of my brother’s lack of health insurance. I took my brother for the MRI and it revealed a large brain tumor, a glioblastoma. His doctor contacted a brain surgeon and arranged for my brother to go to the hospital for surgery. When we arrived at the hospital I got a call from the social worker who informed me that our family would have to pay $50,000 before my brother would be admitted-

He told me that without the money up front he would not be allowed to have surgery. Fortunately, the surgeon, in defiance of the hospital, decided to admit my brother as an emergency that afternoon and he performed the surgery first thing the next morning. My brother lived for 3 years afterwards until the tumor regrew and took his life. My brother spent his life savings to pay for this surgery and the other treatments he needed. He ran out of money and moved to California to live with my other brother where he was able to go on MediCal for the last years of his life.

Stories like this help illustrate what happens to people when everything doesn’t line up exactly right through no fault of their own. We need single payer healthcare insurance. We need to get out from under the control of for profit insurance companies who will make pre-existing conditions a death sentence if we let them. Please vote to make single payer health insurance a reality in Ohio as part of our country’s journey to make single payer a reality for everyone.

Thank you,

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