



**Jennifer Loeb
CEO, Cincinnati’s Ronald McDonald House
On behalf of the Six Ohio Ronald McDonald Houses**

**Ohio House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee
March 23, 2023**

Chair Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston and Committee Members:

My name is Jennifer Loeb and I am the CEO of Cincinnati’s Ronald McDonald House. Today I am here to speak on behalf of the six Ronald McDonald Houses across five chapters in Ohio.

All Ronald McDonald Houses play vital roles in caring for and supporting families while their children are hospitalized and receive life-saving medical care. I come before you today with a request to include an amendment to House Bill 33 that would allow for Medicaid reimbursement for Ronald McDonald House lodging.

In 2022, 4,130 Ohio families lived at Ronald McDonald Houses for 48,236 nights of rest, care, and support. That is more than 48,000 nights of all the comforts of home -- warm beds, hot meals, available laundry facilities, activities for patients and their siblings, and safe spaces to heal, to play, and to laugh.

As one grateful parent shared, *“We were so blessed to be able to stay at Ronald McDonald House. Knowing our daughter would be inpatient for at least 3-4 weeks and having a place to stay not only free of charge but right next door to the hospital was amazing. It lifted a huge financial burden and gave us such peace of mind knowing we were so close. The staff, facilities and meals were excellent. And the extra donations of craft kits, toys and snacks were nice treats for our patient in the hospital.”*

Children whose families live at Ronald McDonald Houses tend to be the sickest, have traveled the furthest distances for care and spend the longest time in the hospital. Ronald McDonald Houses support families by providing community, comfort, and hope to families of seriously ill children so that they can be well-rested and be their best selves during many long days, weeks and even months in the hospital.

The data goes on and on, as do the quotes from our guest families who tell us repeatedly, “We wouldn’t be able to get the care our child needs without a Ronald McDonald House.” We are fortunate that the pediatric hospitals in Ohio are some of the best in the world, but they aren’t in everyone’s backyard. To access that care, many Ohio families must travel



FAMILIES SERVED

OHIO FAMILIES SERVED BY RMHC IN 2022

CHAPTER	OHIO FAMILIES	NIGHTS
Central Ohio	2,348	16,714
Cincinnati	443	10,730
Dayton	133	1,613
Northeast Ohio	741	13,320
Northwest Ohio	465	5,859

**RMHC CHAPTERS IN THE STATE OF OHIO PROVIDED
48,236 NIGHTS OF REST TO OHIO FAMILIES AT ONE
OF OUR SIX RONALD MCDONALD HOUSES.**

STATE	OHIO FAMILIES	NIGHTS
Ohio	4,130	48,236

hundreds of miles. They disrupt their work and home life, incur tremendous debt, take siblings away from school and friends, turning their whole worlds upside down so they can focus on what matters most: their sick children.

What will this mean for Ohio Medicaid families? Simply put, a chance at better outcomes for hospitalized children and their families. In a global study conducted in 2015 in the *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 94% of hospital administrators surveyed stated that a Ronald McDonald House reduces parental stress. More than 90% agreed that the House reduces costs for families and reduces the burden of the hospital assisting with lodging for the family. Additionally, in a study published in *Medical Care Research and Review*, more than 5,400 families with a child admitted to standardized inpatient pediatric and neonatal intensive care at 10 U.S. hospitals were surveyed. Families that stayed at a Ronald McDonald House reported a more positive overall hospital experience than those who stayed elsewhere.

Ohio's Ronald McDonald Houses do not uniformly collect insurance information, so it is difficult to know the exact percentage of families served who are covered by Ohio Medicaid. However, data shows that approximately 50% of the children staying at Ronald McDonald Houses have Medicaid coverage. Medicaid-eligible pediatric patients are almost always accompanied by a parent or guardian when receiving medical care, creating a significant financial burden for the family.

Discussions among Ronald McDonald House chapters across the country indicate that Medicaid in 27 states and Washington D.C. covers lodging. The proposed amendment to HB 33 would have Ohio become the 28th state, and more importantly, provide sustainable funding for the Houses to provide lifechanging care.

Ronald McDonald Houses cannot provide the exact cost of implementing a Medicaid lodging reimbursement as we have incomplete data on the insurance coverage of Ohio families. However, we can make some broad estimates. If children covered by Medicaid account for 50% of the total Ohio family guest nights at Ohio's Ronald McDonald Houses, and the Ohio Department of Medicaid reimbursed at a rate of \$100 per night, the total cost in 2022 would have been \$2,411,800 for these pediatric patients. Under the current FMAP cost sharing structure, the cost to the State of Ohio would have been \$723,540 (or 25% of the total). With several Ronald McDonald Houses expanding their facilities to meet the growing need, we estimate an 18% increase in 2023. This expansion is critical as our Houses run at full capacity and have ongoing waiting lists.

Ronald McDonald Houses around Ohio would like to partner with the Ohio Department of Medicaid in developing a lodging benefit in support of the thousands of Medicaid families who must use a Ronald McDonald House to be close to their child and the critical care they need.

We respectfully request a \$5M appropriation to support lodging for families with children who have special health care needs. This appropriation (\$5M) would be added into the Medicaid Admin line item (651425) with uncodified language:

Of the foregoing appropriation, \$5 million shall be used by the director of Medicaid to work with CMS to add lodging as an administrative service available for families with children who have special health care needs.

By supporting this lodging benefit, you are keeping families together and close to the care they need. You are keeping them well rested and fed. You are surrounding them with love and support when they feel scared and alone. This is an incredibly meaningful way for the state to show its support for families with critically ill children when they need it most.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have.