



Organization: The Arc of Ohio
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Governor Kasich,

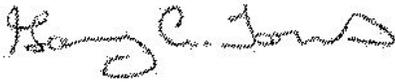
On behalf of our members who are people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, friends, interested citizens and professionals in the disability field, we are grateful to you, the members of your administration, and the Ohio General Assembly for the work done on Sub.HB 49. More specifically, we are particularly grateful for your personal support for the developmental disability system in Ohio over the course of your administration along with the modernization and improvement of Ohio's Medicaid program, including advocating for and implementing the expansion of Medicaid in 2013. Through your efforts, more than 700,000 Ohioans are now able to receive the care and treatment they need to combat physical and mental illnesses. You have our utmost and sincere thanks.

While we are grateful to the General Assembly for their thoughtful approach to the developmental disability system and Medicaid, there are several provisions included in Sub. HB 49 which we believe place the improvements to the program and the care of Ohio's most vulnerable in jeopardy. We respectfully request that you exercise your line-item veto authority on the following provisions.

1. Freezing enrollment of the Group VIII population on July 1, 2018. Such a freeze would cause a significant majority of those currently enrolled to lose their coverage and create a disincentive for those currently enrolled to find or increase employment due to a fear of losing coverage. Additionally, removing anyone from eligibility at a time when the state is facing a catastrophic opiate crisis is short sighted and would lead to a negative economic impact on the state. Finally, this language appears to in conflict with federal law and could face a costly legal challenge.
2. We recognize the intent of instituting guardrails on the program via requirements to be working, in school, have severe physical or mental health needs or be in a drug or alcohol addiction program. However, the language as enrolled fails to recognize other populations in need of health care such as those looking for work or waiting for placement in a drug or alcohol addiction program. We believe a topic of this magnitude should be handled via a separate legislative process so that all stakeholders may ensure a program that is functional, thoughtful and best for all Ohioans. Due to low reimbursement rates and wages, many direct support professionals who care for some of the most vulnerable people in Ohio are dependent on Medicaid for their personal medical care. Removing this benefit from direct support professionals will further drive staff away from this profession and will deepen our current workforce crisis putting people with developmental disabilities at risk.

3. We recognize the desire of the General Assembly to add oversight of the Medicaid program, but believe the current provisions constrain the state's authority by deferring to a federal action. We believe the Controlling Board should have the authority to review all relevant information and make a decision when requested.
4. The Healthy Ohio program was previously submitted and rejected by CMS. Ohio should continue to be a leader and innovator in the area of Medicaid, not waste resources by submitting an outdated, previously rejected plan.

Individually, each provision is problematic and impedes access to health care for Ohioans. Together, these provisions will remove access for hundreds of thousands of Ohioans who currently rely on it to take care of basic health care needs, chronic physical and mental health diagnoses, as well as drug and alcohol addictions. Governor Kasich, we again thank you for your work to lift up those who need assistance. We appreciate your continued leadership in this area.



Gary Tonks
Chief Executive Officer, The Arc of Ohio