



MAIN OFFICE  
37 West Broad Street  
Suite 800  
Columbus, OH 43215-4198  
T 614-224-1344

NORTHEAST OHIO OFFICE  
1422 Euclid Avenue  
Suite 1630  
Cleveland, OH 44115-2001  
T 216-861-6223

Testimony on behalf of  
Philanthropy Ohio's Health Initiative

Provided by  
Jodi Mitchell, Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation

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House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee

Chairwoman Gonzales, Ranking Member Foley and members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the unique voice of philanthropy in this policy discussion. My name is Jodi Mitchell and I am the Health Policy Program Officer for the Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation in Cleveland, Ohio. Mt. Sinai is a member of the Philanthropy Ohio Health Initiative along with following Initiative members:

- Cardinal Health
- CareSource Foundation
- The Cleveland Foundation
- The Columbus Foundation
- The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati
- George Gund Foundation
- The HealthPath Foundation of Ohio
- Kaiser Permanente
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure Northeast Ohio
- Mahoning Valley Hospital Foundation
- McGregor Foundation
- Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation
- The Osteopathic Heritage Foundation
- The Saint Luke's Foundation
- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton
- Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
- United Way of Greater Cincinnati

Philanthropy Ohio supports Medicaid expansion. Formerly known as Ohio Grantmakers Forum, Philanthropy Ohio is an association of foundations, corporate giving programs and other individuals and organizations actively involved in philanthropy. Its mission is to provide leadership for Ohio's philanthropic sector and to enhance the ability of its

members to fulfill their charitable goals. Philanthropy Ohio is comprised of approximately 200 member organizations, whose assets total nearly \$11 billion and who contribute more than \$700 million annually. Ohio philanthropy “puts its money where its mouth is” by investing in initiatives that support individuals, local communities and the state – over \$200 million annually to health initiatives alone.

Philanthropy Ohio supports extending Medicaid coverage up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level. It is important to reference that this equates to an annual income of \$15,415 for an individual or \$26,344 for a family of three. Philanthropy Ohio respectfully requests that you consider the tremendous opportunity to improve the health of Ohio and stimulate the economy through Medicaid expansion. Foundations and philanthropic organizations have a long history of supporting health improvement initiatives and making quality health care more accessible to the underserved populations in their communities. There is no policy decision that has greater potential to improve health access and therefore improve the health status of Ohioans than that of extending Medicaid coverage.

The decision to extend Medicaid to uninsured working poor was a result of a thorough review – essentially a cost/benefit analysis – of what Medicaid expansion could mean for uninsured Ohioans and the economic impact on the state. Clearly philanthropic organizations could not remain silent. Philanthropy Ohio’s Health Initiative is compelled to educate communities about the tremendous benefit of extending Medicaid coverage and the population and coverage gap that Medicaid could serve to reduce uncompensated care and contribute to productive lives.

It is in Ohio’s best interest to take advantage of the 100% federal funding for Medicaid expansion for the next three years. Researchers have noted the positive effects on a state’s economy through job creation and reduction in uncompensated care. From the more narrow but critically important budget balancing perspective, a decision to not extend Medicaid also creates a \$404 million biennial General Revenue Fund hole that the General Assembly will be need to fill with additional cuts to providers and other programs.

When looking at the cost of health care in Ohio, the ‘hidden health care tax’ is often overlooked. When an uninsured person gets sick and is unable to pay medical bills, the costs are absorbed by providers and those insured in the private marketplace in the form of higher charges by private insurers. Medicaid expansion will help reduce this cost to privately insured individuals and employers. It will provide security to Ohio’s hospitals and health professionals whose uncompensated care costs are projected to rise even as disproportionate share payments to institutions decrease if the state chooses not to expand Medicaid.

Extending Medicaid coverage will improve the health of the state and significantly boost the state’s economy. It is a win-win for Ohio and its citizens. It is estimated that over 275,000 uninsured Ohioans will gain health coverage if Ohio chooses to expand Medicaid. Uninsured Ohioans contribute greatly to Ohio’s poor health rankings as they

are reported to have worse physical and mental health status due to the lack of access to quality health care.

Behind all of these numbers are uninsured working poor trying to make better lives for their families -- Ohioans with untreated mental health needs and tens-of-thousands-of-Ohioans who support their families and futures with health care sector jobs.

There is a strong economic case for expansion, coupled with an important health benefit to the newly enrolled. Having health insurance makes a difference for individuals and families, and these benefits are shared by the business community through a strong, healthy workforce.

Ohio foundations are committed to partnering with the General Assembly to improve the health of Ohio residents, awarding over \$200 million in health focused grants in an average year. These dollars, however, pale in comparison to the resources that Medicaid expansion can provide. We remain supportive of efforts to strengthen the health and well-being of Ohio's communities and extending Medicaid coverage will do that and more for Ohioans.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the unique philanthropic voice to you today on this important policy issue and we respectfully urge you to keep an open mind and review the full range of economic analysis to make an informed decision on such an important issue facing the health of Ohioans.

With me is Claudia Herrold from Philanthropy Ohio who is available to also answer any questions you may have. And I would like to invite Heather Morris from Massillon, Ohio who accompanied me today to share her story and helps to personally understand the impact of this policy decision.