



Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies

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Testimony before the House Finance and Appropriations Committee

Philip Cole, Executive Director
Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies
March 21, 2013

Good morning Chairman Amstutz, Vice Chairman McClain, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee. My name is Phil Cole, Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies and I am here today to offer testimony in support of Medicaid Expansion as set forth in H.B. 59. I appreciate the opportunity to present my testimony.

The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies represents the interests of Ohio's fifty community action agencies. We serve the needs of low-income people in all of Ohio's eighty-eight counties. We are locally-controlled private corporations that administer over \$600,000,000 of resources in Ohio, aimed at alleviating the problems of poverty in Ohio's communities. We employ over 6,500 people. And we provide service to over 800,000 individual Ohioans.

Our member agencies are working with other groups and coalitions around the State because we agree with Governor Kasich and believe that Medicaid expansion is not only right for the State of Ohio, but the morally correct thing to do for low-income Ohioans. From the studies presented to us, it appears that over 300,000 more Ohioans will be covered by the Medicaid expansion. These are Ohioans who are not covered by insurance now.

Because uninsured, low-income Ohioans often have to choose between medical care and other necessities, they often delay medical care until small problems become big problems. (Preventative care is almost nonexistent for uninsured people.) Too many times, when they fail to care for the small problems, the hospital emergency room becomes their primary care physician. As you have heard from others, this is costly for both the individual and the hospital. Having to constantly choose between which necessity to pay for is a terrible choice to make and one which the General Assembly can make better.

Some members of the General Assembly are concerned about the cost to the federal budget and our constant federal debt and deficit problems. Concerns

*OACAA exists to support its members and to strengthen a unified Community Action presence in
Ohio*



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about the debt and deficit are valid, but they will not be corrected by denying Medicaid to Ohioans.

Refusing these federal dollars will not reduce federal expenditures. The money would go back to Washington and then on to other states to help low-income, uninsured Texans or Pennsylvanians, or citizens of South Carolina for example. While I have no objection to helping other Americans, I believe it should be the duty of the government of this State to help Ohioans first.

Chairman Amstutz, I thank you and the committee members for your time and attention. Once again, we hope you will join us in supporting the position of Governor Kasich and the expansion of the Medicaid program. I will be happy to answer your questions.

Philip E. Cole
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