

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2019

The Honorable Mike DeWine
Governor, State of Ohio
Hall of States
444 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 542
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governor DeWine,

We write in strong opposition to the Administration's recently unveiled plan to encourage states to block grant Medicaid ironically entitled, "Healthy Adult Opportunity".¹

Federal law requires the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to make matching funds available to state Medicaid programs to help states provide medical care for residents in need.² For decades, Medicaid has made significant progress in expanding access to health care for low-income families, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. After adoption of Medicaid expansion in 2014, Ohio further extended health care coverage to the most vulnerable families in the state. As of October 2019, Ohio has enrolled over 2.64 million individuals in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program — an increase of 24.1 percent since the first Affordable Care Act Open Enrollment Period and related Medicaid program changes occurred in October 2013.³

The Administration deceptively claims the new plan will "put patients first through state flexibility" in Medicaid. Make no mistake; the statement is nothing more than code meant to authorize CMS and states to administer deep cuts to the program. Research indicates instituting a per capita cap for Medicaid in Ohio would likely increase the state's financial risk, decrease its authority over program design, reduce access to services, eliminate long-standing oversight protections and encourage institutionalization of older adults.⁴

In 1996, when Congress replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, TANF's ability to act as a first responder to support low-income people during tough economic times significantly eroded. The program failed to adjust for inflation, diminishing its value over time; states no longer had the ability to

¹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. 2020. *Trump Administration Announces Transformative Medicaid Healthy Adult Opportunity*. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/trump-administration-announces-transformative-medicaid-healthy-adult-opportunity>

² Payment to States: SSA. https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title19/1903.htm

³ Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services. 2019. *State Profile Index*. <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/stateprofile.html?state=Ohio>

⁴ Anthes. 2020. *New Medicaid Block Grant Waiver: Risk Disguised as Flexibility*. The Center for Community Solutions. https://www.communitysolutions.com/new-medicaid-block-grant-waiver-risk-disguised-flexibility/?mc_cid=007da48560&mc_eid=c9806b87b6

divert substantial funding to other areas of the budget; and it provided little support for struggling people due to the lack of an eligibility floor.⁵ Even after Congress provided additional temporary funding for states that served more families during the Great Recession, states were reluctant to make changes that might increase their caseload after the funding expired.⁶

The plan to allow state Medicaid block grants further demonstrates the Administration's clear commitment to gutting social service programs and access to health care for our most vulnerable. It comes on the heels of the Administration's move to allow several states, including Ohio, to take Medicaid coverage away from certain beneficiaries who do not meet work requirements. However, pending coverage losses and legal challenges have led several interested states to reconsider implementing the policy.⁷

America's families deserve better. We urge you to support Ohio's Medicaid expansion population and reject proposals aimed at weakening this critical, life-saving program. We are counting on you!

Sincerely,




Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

⁵ Schott. 2017. *Lessons from TANF: Block-Granting a Safety-Net Program Has Significantly Reduced Its Effectiveness*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/lessons-from-tanf-block-granting-a-safety-net-program-has>

⁶ Hall. 2015. *TANF 101: TANF in the Great Recession, Weakness in the Safety Net*. Center for Law and Social Policy. <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/04/TANF-101-TANF-in-the-Great-Recession.pdf>

⁷ Schubel. 2020. *More States Reconsidering Medicaid Work Requirements*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/more-states-reconsidering-medicaid-work-requirements>