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## **Federal Medicaid Proposals Could Devastate Ohio's Seniors and People with Disabilities, and Their Families**

### ***New Report Shows that Federal Cutbacks Could Harm 588,600 Ohio Seniors and People with Disabilities who Depend on Medicaid***

Columbus, OH—As Ohio lawmakers continue to wrestle over Ohio's Medicaid budget, Congress is debating several proposals to dramatically cut back on federal Medicaid—including a new proposal enabling states to reduce program eligibility. A report released today shows that cuts could have a devastating impact on Ohio's 588,600 seniors and people with disabilities who depend on Medicaid as their lifeline.

The report by the consumer health organization Families USA shows that 11.4 percent of Ohio's seniors, and 41.7 percent of its people with disabilities, receive health coverage through the Medicaid program. Medicaid pays for care that makes it possible for 89,800 seniors and people with disabilities in Ohio to remain living in their communities. Medicaid is the largest payer of nursing home care, and 63 percent of Ohio's nursing home residents receive coverage through the program.

"As Ohio looks to balance spending between home health services like PASSPORT and nursing homes, federal cutbacks would knock over the scale," said Cathy Levine, co-chair, Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. "It would also jeopardize the health of patients and the financial stability of the families who rely on Medicaid for their medical care and long term care options."

According to the Families USA report, proposed federal cuts to Medicaid's long-term care coverage would also have an adverse impact on Ohio's economy. Based on the latest statistics available, there were 138,500 direct-care workers providing long-term care services in Ohio, many of whom would lose their jobs if Medicaid cut back eligibility for long-term care services. Additionally, this direct loss in jobs would have an adverse multiplier effect throughout Ohio's economy.

Based on the latest data available, in Ohio there were almost 2 million informal caregivers—typically family members and friends—who provided help for seniors and people with disabilities needing long-term care. If Medicaid's long-term care coverage is diminished, the burden on these caregivers' lives would increase exponentially.

"Keeping people in the community and out of nursing homes saves the state money," said Col Owens, co-chair, Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. "Inadequate state funding coupled with federal funding

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cuts for home and community-based services means more Ohioans will have to turn to expensive institutional care, costing Ohio more in the long run.”

The Families USA report shows that long-term care costs can be financially devastating to families and to the state. In Ohio, nursing home costs average \$70,800 per year. Home health aides cost, on average, \$20 per hour. Many people who need long-term care exhaust their savings to the point that they become eligible for Medicaid. For 188,200 seniors, and 400,300 people with disabilities in Ohio, Medicaid is a critical source of coverage—and often the only avenue—for long term care.

“Cutting Medicaid funding or changing it to a block grant at the federal level would not only be bad for Ohio seniors and people with disabilities but would also impact children and pregnant women,” said Owens. “In times of recession when states have decreased revenues, Medicaid caseloads often go up. The existing Medicaid joint federal-state financing mechanism works to bring in significant federal money to states when they desperately need it. A block grant would leave states with few options but to cut services or restrict eligibility.”

A copy of the Families USA report, “Cutting Medicaid: Harming Seniors and People with Disabilities Who Need Long-Term Care,” can be obtained at: <http://familiesusa2.org/assets/pdfs/long-term-care/Cutting-Medicaid.pdf>

A specific state fact on this issue for Ohio is available at: <http://familiesusa2.org/assets/pdfs/long-term-care/cutting-medicaid/Ohio.pdf>

*Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage is a nonpartisan coalition uniting the diverse consumer voice with the goal of achieving affordable, high quality care for all. Our membership includes AFSCME Council 8 AFL-CIO, American Cancer Society East Central Division, Faith Community Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, National Alliance for Mental Illness of Ohio, National Multiple Sclerosis Society Ohio Chapters, Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans, Ohio Asian American Health Coalition, Ohio Council of Churches, Progress Ohio, Service Employees International Union, Toledo Area Jobs with Justice Coalition, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1059, UHCAN Ohio, and We Are The Uninsured.*

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