



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 9, 2016

CONTACT:
Kelsey Raines, 614-456-0060 x228

CMS Rejects “Not Healthy for Ohio” Medicaid Waiver Request

Today the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) [announced its decision](#) to reject the state’s proposed Healthy Ohio Medicaid waiver. CMS expressed concern with the proposed waiver’s plan to charge premiums to enrollees, regardless of income, and to exclude from coverage anyone who missed a payment, ultimately harming access to affordable coverage. This decision follows two public comment periods, during which the Ohio Department of Medicaid received 956 comments, overwhelmingly in opposition to the plan.

“We applaud CMS for rejecting a plan that would be harmful to the health of hundreds of thousands of Ohioans who depend on Medicaid for their source of health coverage,” said Steve Wagner, Executive Director of UHCAN Ohio. “Requiring people with low incomes to pay premiums for health coverage and locking them out from re-enrollment when they can’t pay will intrinsically decrease enrollment, which does not further Medicaid’s goals of providing a health care safety net to vulnerable people. Furthermore, the waiver would widen the gap in health status between people of color and white people by causing a disproportionate percentage of persons of color to be without coverage.”

Research has shown that requiring even small contributions from people with low incomes causes decreased enrollment, leading to poorer health outcomes. Ms. B. is a retail clerk and single mother of 4 children who received help from UHCAN Ohio to enroll in Medicaid. Until she gained Medicaid coverage, she used the emergency room as her source of care and only sought care when she was too sick to work. Ms. B can’t afford the insurance on her job and has little income left to cover out-of-pocket costs. If required to pay for Medicaid, Ms. B. and thousands of other Ohioans would struggle and possibly lose coverage, forcing them to go back to using the emergency room again.

Seven other Ohio organizations also signed on to [UHCAN Ohio’s comments](#). In addition to their own comments, UHCAN Ohio gathered and submitted 166 comments from Ohioans who oppose the waiver.

“This victory is due to advocates’ significant efforts to let the Ohio Department of Medicaid and CMS know that this plan will not work for Ohio,” said Wagner. “We have seen in Indiana, where a similar program has been piloted, that premiums create barriers to coverage and financial hardships for people with low incomes. Ohio’s

legislature should refrain from imposing premiums on Medicaid recipients until Indiana's demonstration is fully evaluated."

UHCAN Ohio is a statewide non-partisan, non-profit organization building the voice of consumers to achieve quality, affordable, accessible health coverage for all Ohioans. www.uhcanohio.org

###