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CONTACT:
Steve Wagner, 614-949-5609

House Republicans' Proposed Medicaid Overhaul Endangers Coverage for Millions of Ohioans

A reportⁱ released today by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities explains how House Republicans' proposed plans to overhaul Medicaid would shift costs to states, force most states to end their expansion of Medicaid, and reduce coverage for older adults, children, and people with disabilities.

House Republicans' proposal would repeal federal funding for the Medicaid expansion, which in 2014 began covering adults without minor children in the states that accepted the expansion. By phasing out all of the enhanced federal funding that states now receive for covering the expansion population, states like Ohio would have to pay between four and seven times their current expenditures to continue covering the expansion group in 2019. This is an expense that would likely force states to end or dramatically cut back their Medicaid expansion. Without expanded Medicaid, gains to coverage and access to care would be reversed. In Ohio, the 700,000 people who gained coverage through Medicaid expansion would lose access to health care.ⁱⁱ

In addition to ending Medicaid expansion, the proposal would convert Medicaid to a per capita cap or block grant. Federal funding for Medicaid would decrease over time, shifting costs to the states. Even small cuts in federal funding would create large budget shortfalls for states. Because the proposal allows states to make cuts to coverage that current law doesn't permit, states could make up for budget shortfalls by cutting eligibility and benefits for older adults and people with disabilities. States could also restrict eligibility and benefits for the 30 million children who get their health care through Medicaid, many of whom could lose coverage altogether.

Block grants or per capita caps would no longer allow Medicaid funding to states to increase in response to crises. In Ohio, federal Medicaid matching payments to the state rose as the number of people needing Medicaid to cover the cost of treatment for the opioid epidemic rose. Without that funding, states would have to cover costs on their own and/or provide less treatment for those with a substance use disorder, rather than expanding and improving care.

"This proposal would erase the gains in coverage we saw from the Medicaid expansion and put the health coverage of more than two million Ohio children, older adults, and people with disabilities at risk," said Steve Wagner, Executive Director of Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio. "Governor Kasich has called on his fellow Republicans to protect Medicaid expansion. We join him in asking Congress not to rip health coverage away from millions of the most vulnerable Ohioans."

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

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ⁱ Edwin Park, Matt Broaddus, Jesse Cross-Call, Jessica Schubel. "House Republican Proposals to Radically Overhaul Medicaid Would Shift Costs, Risks to States." *Center for Budget and Policy Priorities*, February 24, 2017, <http://www.cbpp.org/research/health/house-republican-proposals-to-radically-overhaul-medicaid-would-shift-costs-risks-to>.

ⁱⁱ "Ohio Medicaid Group VIII Assessment: A Report to the Ohio General Assembly." *Ohio Department of Medicaid*, January 1, 2017, <http://medicaid.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Resources/Reports/Annual/Group-VIII-Assessment.pdf>.