



PRESS RELEASE
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Policy Matters to Kasich Administration: Scrap Medicaid work requirement proposal

Public comments on Ohio's proposal to impose work requirements on people who receive health care through Medicaid expansion close March 18. Today, Policy Matters Ohio Executive Director Amy Hanauer sent a letter to Ohio Department of Medicaid Director Barbara Sears, asking the Kasich administration to reconsider submitting the proposal to the Trump Administration.

Hanauer's letter argued that the proposal could cause many people to lose access to medical care. Hanauer outlined other problems as well, "The proposal is unnecessary, because the vast majority of Medicaid patients are working, disabled or caring for someone who is disabled," Hanauer wrote. "The proposed requirement is ill-suited to the uncertain schedules and other realities of the low-wage work place. The state fails to fund necessary components of the program. Finally, the proposed program may violate labor laws."

Ohio is asking the federal government to waive rules so Medicaid expansion enrollees must either comply with, or be exempted from, a work requirement. The waiver would be granted as a Section 1115 demonstration project, created to spur states to find new, innovative ways to improve health outcomes. The waivers were originally used to help people access Medicaid. The Trump Administration is now urging states to use the waivers to erect barriers to care through work requirements. The state projects the new requirement will cause more than 18,000 people to lose health coverage in the first year, but Policy Matters expects that number to be far higher.

Sixty-one percent of Medicaid patients already work. The rest are either people with disabilities, people caring for a loved one with a disability, early retirees, students or job seekers. Nearly 75 percent of Ohio's Medicaid expansion enrollees looking for work said having health care made it easier to continue the search. More than half who were working said health care helped them to stay in their jobs.

"The Medicaid expansion is the state's most important tool in improving health and fighting the growing drug epidemic in Ohio," Hanauer told Sears. "Placing the entire Medicaid expansion population at risk of losing access to health care, especially at a time of a public health crisis, is a profound disservice to Ohio and Ohioans. We urge you not to submit this request to the federal government. If it is submitted, we urge the federal government to reject it."

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Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.