



For immediate release

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## Ohio House moves Medicaid in wrong direction

The Ohio House of Representatives is planning to erect barriers to the state's Medicaid expansion program that could jeopardize health coverage for hundreds of thousands of adults and children, a new report by Policy Matters Ohio says.

"Ohio's Medicaid expansion has been an unqualified success, with more than half a million Ohioans newly insured and billions of federal dollars pumped into the Ohio economy," said Wendy Patton, report author and senior project director at Policy Matters.

Health-care providers report better bottom lines and healthier patients. But the Ohio House of Representatives took a giant step backwards in its version of the fiscal year 2016-17 budget, with a proposal that would make it more difficult for low-income families and their children to obtain and maintain health coverage. The House plan, outlined in substitute House Bill 64, directs the state to pursue a waiver of Medicaid rules to implement a new program design.

Under the House plan, Ohio patients would face higher costs and suspensions over payment or paperwork. Administrative complexity could cause delays in enrollment. Annual and lifetime caps could interrupt care. The hurdles would undermine the goals of health-care reform.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) included a federally financed plan to expand Medicaid coverage. The goal is to address unmet health care needs, control burgeoning costs of untreated chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes, and to strengthen a health-care system burdened by uninsured patients. Thirty states, including Ohio, have taken the federal money.

Ohio's Medicaid expansion gets good reviews in national studies. It allows people to see a doctor and to get needed health care they could not otherwise obtain.

The new version of House Bill 64 would abandon Ohio's successful model and require the director of Medicaid to seek a waiver of many Medicaid rules. The plan, misleadingly named "Healthy Ohio", would jeopardize the state's success in extending health coverage to its most vulnerable residents.

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