

WellLink Health Alliance Opposes Harmful Provisions in the OBBBA

With a legacy spanning over 100 years, WellLink Health Alliance is a regional hospital association and advocate for healthcare providers and for the well-being of Northeast Ohio communities. WellLink is deeply concerned about the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), recently passed by the U.S. House and now under consideration in the Senate.

This legislation poses serious threats to the health and well-being of Ohioans. The proposed cuts to Medicaid and the Health Insurance Marketplace would disproportionately harm patients across our state – not just those enrolled in Medicaid. In communities across Northeast Ohio, especially rural and underserved areas, hospitals may be forced to reduce critical services, lay off staff, or even close their doors. Patients would face longer wait times, more crowded emergency departments, and fewer advancements in care due to restricted resources.

The Medicaid-related provisions in the bill target well-established, lawful state funding mechanisms – including provider taxes and state-directed payments – under the false premise of addressing waste, fraud, and abuse. These programs are vital to offsetting decades of underfunding for care provided to Medicaid patients. Eliminating them would slash federal Medicaid support by more than \$700 billion over 10 years, causing millions nationwide – including thousands of Ohioans – to lose coverage.

The fiscal impact on Ohio's state budget would be immediate and severe, giving state officials no time to prepare for the fallout. These changes not only threaten health coverage and care access for vulnerable and working families but also undermine the financial stability of our local hospitals and the communities they serve.

In addition to the Medicaid provisions, WellLink Health Alliance is also concerned about the changes to loan programs that are vital to pursuing healthcare careers. The House-passed reconciliation bill eliminates the Grad PLUS Loan Program, caps federal loan amounts at \$150,000 for professional borrowers, and excludes time spent in a medical or dental internship or residency program from counting towards loan forgiveness.

Eliminating Grad PLUS loans and implementing federal borrowing caps for medical school would send medical student borrowers to the less-protected, higher-cost private loan market. As a result, students who would otherwise use Grad PLUS loans to finance their medical education may instead choose not to attend medical school, deepening healthcare workforce shortages. Imposing financial burdens on medical students will negatively impact the healthcare workforce and the communities they serve.

WellLink Health Alliance urges Senator Moreno and Senator Husted to stand with Ohio communities and healthcare providers by opposing the House-passed OBBBA. Please protect the Medicaid program. Please maintain the Grad PLUS loan program and raise borrowing caps and maintain public service loan forgiveness eligibility for medical students.

We must protect access to care and preserve the programs that keep our communities healthy and our healthcare institutions strong.