

OACB opposes current Senate health care bill **Proposed funding changes could strain Ohio's DD safety net**

The Ohio Association of County Boards of DD (OACB) has determined that the current version of the health care bill being considered by the U.S. Senate, the "Better Care Reconciliation Act" (BCRA), could have substantial, negative financial consequences for people with developmental disabilities and the county boards of DD that serve them.

The BCRA introduces mandatory per capita spending caps that would result in Ohio's Medicaid program receiving less funding over time for disability-related services. The Cleveland-based Center for Community Solutions (CCS) projects that the BCRA's spending reductions and growth in Ohio's Medicaid disability needs could lead to a statewide funding gap in 2030 of between \$13.4 billion and \$17.7 billion for Medicaid-funded disability programs in our state. [Click here](#) to read the CCS report.

Under the BCRA, this rapid spending slowdown would shrink the financial pool from which Ohio's DD services are funded, and different groups that benefit from disability-related Medicaid spending would have to compete for a smaller amount of state-controlled funding. Such a scenario could financially strain Ohio's DD safety net by forcing the state to make tough financial decisions. OACB is concerned that such circumstances could result in costs being shifted to counties, and service reductions could follow as some counties could be forced to either reevaluate their service offerings or request additional funding from local taxpayers to make up the difference.

Ohio's county boards of DD serve more than 93,000 Ohioans with developmental disabilities. Boards must have stability and predictability in order to plan for the current and future service needs of their communities. The current version of the BCRA hurts this long-term sustainability and sows doubts in the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

For these reasons, OACB cannot support the BCRA or any federal health care legislation that fails to put long-term fiscal safeguards in place for the services on which Ohioans with developmental disabilities rely. OACB urges Ohio's congressional delegation to advocate for more sustainable and financially responsible alternatives.

Frequently Asked Questions

To explore this topic in greater detail and better explain the association's position, OACB has created this list of "Frequently Asked Questions." Please note that this document is subject to change as health care negotiations continue in Washington, D.C.

What would the Senate's health care bill do?

- The BCRA contains language that would cap the amount of federal Medicaid funding for each state on a per-person, per-year basis. This plan, known as "block granting," would be a major shift from current rules that allow funding to change based on the needs of each state's Medicaid-eligible population.
- Given differences in how Medicaid funds are spent on people with low incomes versus people with developmental disabilities, OACB cannot know exactly how block-granting Medicaid would change Ohio's DD system.

What are OACB's specific misgivings with the Senate's bill?

- OACB takes issue with how the bill would implement Medicaid block grants. More specifically, the association opposes the bill's use of certain economic indicators to determine how much money each state would receive.
- As written, the BCRA's block grant proposal would use the consumer price index for medical expenses (CPI-M) to determine how much a state's federal Medicaid block grant would potentially increase under the new rules until 2025. The CPI-M is a fair indicator of health care costs and a good way to project how much each state's Medicaid needs will change over time.
- However, the bill would use a different economic indicator to determine Medicaid allotments starting in 2025. Beginning that year, the U.S. government would switch to the consumer price index for urban residents (CPI-U) to determine states' Medicaid allotments for people with disabilities. The CPI-U is a more general number that less accurately reflects health care costs and grows at a slower rate than the CPI-M.
- This means Medicaid funding would be less likely to keep up with Ohio's disability spending needs over time. The switch would slow the growth of Medicaid to the extent that lawmakers could be forced to decide between funding medical services for able-bodied Ohioans (which is required by federal law) and funding long-term DD services and supports.
- **The bottom line:** Under a block grant system, this change would result in less federal Medicaid money being allotted to Ohio as compared to the current system. Furthermore, spending reductions would accelerate in 2025 given how the BCRA would allot federal dollars. Slowing Medicaid spending growth to this extent could lead to less funding for county boards of DD and their programs as multiple stakeholder populations begin competing for their fair share of a smaller pool of resources.

What effects could these spending reductions have on DD services?

- If the BCRA's projected spending reductions are approved and the funding gap of \$13.4 billion to \$17.7 billion is realized, some county boards of DD could be pressured to reevaluate non-mandatory services.
- County boards of DD are required by law to protect the safety and physical wellbeing of people with developmental disabilities in Ohio. This means that boards cannot cut back on critical medical care or protective services.
- If county boards are forced to make do with less, however, they may need to cut in areas that are not essential to safety. These areas include children's programs, adult day programs, employment, and other services.
- Each county board is different, and there is no guarantee that every county would be affected in the same way by this issue. *However, there is no acceptable level of service cuts when it comes to supporting the health, safety, and well being of people with developmental disabilities in Ohio.*

What is OACB asking of Ohio's congressional delegation?

- OACB is asking U.S. Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown to oppose the bill in its current form and work together on an alternative that would be less financially risky for county boards of DD.
- This fix could come in the form an amendment to the current bill or new bipartisan legislation that does more to guarantee the long-term fiscal sustainability of Ohio's DD support system.
- OACB has expressed its concerns to both senators' offices and is discussing a fix that would protect county boards of DD and the people and communities they serve over the long term.



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How did OACB make its decision to oppose the bill?

- The decision to oppose the bill is the result of weeks of research by OACB policy staffers, interactions with policymakers, and discussions within the Policy Committee of the OACB Board of Trustees.
- The decision to oppose the bill in its current form was made once it became clear that the proposal could have a significant negative impact on the ability of county boards of DD to adequately serve the people with developmental disabilities (and their families) who rely on them.

Would OACB's stance change if its concerns were addressed?

- Discussions in Congress have been unpredictable thus far, and OACB cannot guess as to what future bills might contain. The association would need to thoroughly review any updated or new legislation before declaring a position.
- OACB will continue to oppose any bill that we feel does not protect the financial future of Ohio's safety net for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

What are OACB's next steps?

- OACB will continue engaging with Ohio's senators on possible ways forward and update members and stakeholders as developments occur.
- As necessary, OACB will issue legislative calls to action with specific instructions for taking part in the advocacy process.

Updates and Additional Information

This document will be updated as necessary as health care negotiations continue in Washington, D.C. OACB members and system stakeholders will be kept up to date on all developments via typical communications channels.