



## Health coverage is critical to keeping families and children healthy

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## MEDICAID IS A LIFELINE FOR OHIO FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

Ohio faces significant job loss as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Ohioans need support to keep their families healthy. But, the pandemic has exposed some weaknesses in our health insurance system - we must strengthen our Medicaid system for families and children during these uncertain times.

Even before the pandemic, Ohio experienced a spike in uninsured children over the last two years. Georgetown Center for Children and Families found that Ohio was one of only eight states to see its overall uninsured rate climb in 2018, and unfortunately our youngest children were the most at risk of being uninsured.

Between March 8th and April 11th, almost 15% of the state's workforce (964,566 Ohio workers) filed claims for unemployment benefits. Each of those claims represents a person and in many cases, a family. For many, health insurance is tied to employment, therefore a pink slip also means the loss of health insurance.

Health Coverage is Critical to Keeping Families & Children Healthy. In the

middle of this public health crisis, Ohio's number one priority should be the health and safety of its residents. In the middle of this public health crisis, Ohio's number one priority should be the health and safety of its residents.

However, the loss of health insurance coupled with loss of employment makes this a difficult task. When individuals lose their health coverage, they begin a dangerous cycle of rationing their medication, delaying prescription refills, and avoiding physician visits when needed to avoid unaffordable medical bills. This could be life-threatening for individuals with chronic health issues, and also spells trouble for children who don't receive their well-check visits and vaccinations out of their families' fear of the costs.

Make Medicaid Enrollment Easier for Recently Unemployed Ohioans. Medicaid is available to many of the Ohioans who have lost their jobs, and subsequently, their health insurance. Ohio has made the commitment that access to health care should be uninterrupted during the time of the pandemic. After the public health emergency ends, however, the economy will take time to recover.

Families will still need the critical health coverage Medicaid provides and the state should act to ensure all eligible individuals remain enrolled as the economy recovers and tie continuing eligibility to the state's overall unemployment rate.

With the surge of unemployment, Ohio should consider wrapping the application for unemployment into the current human services integrated eligibility system, which qualifies families for multiple programs simultaneously. This would streamline and simplify the process for families.

Although Congress passed two important stimulus packages that provide additional funding for health care for millions and provide enhanced federal Medicaid funding to states, Ohio still needs long-term economic support and families need to feel confident that health care coverage will continue uninterrupted if needed. For many Ohioans who find themselves out of work through no fault of their own, Medicaid is a lifeline for them and their families. If there were ever a time that we needed to ensure families have access to coverage and care, it is now.