

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FOODBANKS

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Cuts to efforts to educate and enroll consumers about health coverage options will dismantle years of progress and harm Ohioans

Media Statement from Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director for the Ohio Association of Foodbanks:

“Late last night, President Trump’s administration announced a 90 percent cut in advertising to promote enrollment in health care plans available through the Health Insurance Marketplace and a rollback of funds provided each year to navigators. This announcement came on the heels of the release of the Kasich-Hickenlooper plan to stabilize the health insurance market, a plan which recognizes outreach efforts like the navigator program as an integral tool for improving access to affordable health coverage.

“The Ohio Association of Foodbanks has been proud for the past four years to partner with a statewide consortium of community organizations to implement Ohio’s largest federal navigator program. Our navigators have built relationships with consumers and community partners over that time and are widely known across Ohio as trusted assisters who can provide one-on-one, comprehensive support to vulnerable, hard-to-serve populations. We are a critical part of a larger effort to ensure that Americans don’t go without affordable, quality health care.

“We already absorbed a 15 percent cut to our navigator funding last year and worked to consolidate and streamline services as much as possible. Our navigator staff are committed to this work – they dedicate long hours to combatting myths and misunderstandings about available coverage options, helping consumers shop for plans they can afford or enroll in Medicaid when their incomes are too low to afford private health insurance. Here is a sampling of stories from our navigators about consumers they have helped over the past few months:

- Due to a layoff at a local plant, a family lost their employer-provided health coverage at the end of June. They came to me with questions about how they could be covered. One spouse still had employment, but did not have employer-provided coverage. I was able to talk about the options available to them through the Marketplace, when their coverage would begin, and how to proceed. We completed their Marketplace application and I printed off multiple policies so they could take them home for further review. The family scheduled a follow-up appointment the next day and came in to meet with me to complete their application. Health insurance for this couple will begin on September 1.
- A consumer who is losing Medicaid coverage due to increased household income will experience no gap in health insurance, as he now qualifies for a Special Enrollment Period and is enrolled in a Qualified Health Plan (QHP) with an Advanced Premium Tax Credit (APTC) and Cost Sharing Reductions (CSRs), scheduled to begin when his Medicaid terminates. He told me he is relieved to be able to get health insurance during the 90-day period before he becomes eligible for his new employer-based coverage.
- I helped a consumer update their income and other information after they experienced some changes in their employment. The consumer had paid back some of their tax credit in a previous year due to underreporting their income, so they were well aware of the need to keep their information as accurate and up-to-date as possible. They were not comfortable with handling the process on their own, however, and since I had helped them with their application during open enrollment, they gave me a call for some assistance. Together, we were able to update the income section to accurately reflect what they expect to earn during the remainder of the year.
- I assisted a consumer who is a legal immigrant from Senegal. He is married with two children and works in a warehouse. He speaks little English, and was so relieved that I spoke French so that I

could help him with a Medicaid application for his family. He came prepared with all the necessary documents. Because of my language skills, the application process went a lot smoother for this hard-working man, and he got his questions answered.

- I helped a nursing student find access to health coverage. She had recently started nursing classes and therefore had to cut back on her hours at work, making her ineligible for the employer-provided insurance her workplace had to offer. Due to her medical conditions, it was imperative that she has some form of health coverage. Her income was too high for Medicaid, but she did qualify for a substantial tax credit to help make her Marketplace plan more affordable. She took the material home to discuss further with her family, and called back the next day to make an appointment to complete the application and enroll in insurance.

“Thanks to affordable options through the Marketplace and the expansion of Medicaid in Ohio, nearly 1 million Ohioans have gained health coverage through the Affordable Care Act. We view that as an undeniable success, and we urge lawmakers, including Ohio’s congressional delegation and Ohio Governor John Kasich, to press the Trump Administration to continue to invest in the advertising and outreach efforts that are vital to maintaining and growing upon that success.”

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About the Ohio Association of Foodbanks

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio’s largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2016, the association and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 208 million pounds of food and grocery items. The association also serves as the home of The Ohio Benefit Bank and operates the state’s largest navigator program for the Affordable Care Act. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

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The Ohio Association of Foodbanks Navigator Consortium Includes:

Access Health Mahoning Valley
Asian Services in Action, Inc.
Community Action Committee of Pike County
Cuyahoga Health Access Partnership
Freestore Foodbank
Ohio Association of Free Clinics
Southeast, Inc.
Toledo Lucas County CareNet
Washington-Morgan Community Action