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OPRA Expresses Disappointment at Lack of Medicaid Extension in State Budget

Columbus – The Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) today expressed disappointment over the exclusion of Medicaid extension to low-wage workers in the state’s new two-year budget, passed yesterday by the Ohio General Assembly. OPRA is the statewide trade association representing more than 150 for-profit and non-profit small businesses and organizations that provide services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Our membership is deeply disappointed with the legislature’s failure to include Medicaid extension in the state’s new biennial budget, as originally proposed by Governor John Kasich. And we are equally troubled that, although we have heard some indications Medicaid extension will be re-visited in the future, no clear plan or path forward has been identified,” said Mark Davis, OPRA president.

Davis said OPRA had strongly supported Medicaid extension because it would be the right thing to do for Ohio in financial terms, and for the 275,000 Ohioans who would have received health care insurance under the state’s Medicaid program. As the budget is now written, OPRA members stand to incur \$20 million or more in new costs and penalties – one of, if not the largest, unfunded mandates in the developmental disabilities system’s history.

“OPRA members employ 13,000 workers statewide, with 11,245 of them working as direct service professionals earning an average hourly salary of \$9.73. Many of these employees lack health care coverage, but would have qualified for it had Medicaid extension to low-wage workers been approved. A financial analysis we completed earlier this year showed that, without Medicaid extension, OPRA members will face penalties imposed by the Affordable Care Act or new employer health insurance costs ranging as high as \$22,490,000,” Davis said.

“We can only hope that, in the coming weeks, state leaders, policy makers, and stakeholders can begin a new process which results in sensible, lasting Medicaid reform in Ohio that includes the extension of Medicaid to low-wage workers. Several hundred thousand of our fellow citizens are depending on our leaders to lead,” Davis added.