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Contact: Mark Davis, President  
Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA)  
614-224-6772

**Statement on Medicaid Extension by Mark Davis**

Today's vote by the Ohio Controlling Board to approve the extension of health care benefits to an estimated 275,000 Ohioans (with a net of 275,000 with adjustments for recent eligibility changes) represents good government in action. This decision to allow federal funds to be used to provide health care to over many low-wage Ohioans, strengthens Ohio's workforce, brings \$13 billion into the state, and will create over 30,000 jobs in Ohio over the next ten years. Simply put, extending Medicaid coverage to such a large number of our fellow citizens is the right thing to do for our state.

The Ohio Provider Resource Association commends Governor John Kasich for his unwavering support of Medicaid extension. We also thank President Faber, Speaker Batchelder and the Democratic Caucus for their help in securing this approval for Medicaid extension. And OPRA salutes the members of the Controlling Board who voted for this historic initiative: Senator Chris Widener Representative Ross McGregor, Senator Tom Sawyer, Representative Chris Redfern, and Board President Randy Cole.

OPRA members and staff have worked hard all year long in support of Medicaid extension. Going forward, we are prepared to do anything in our power to assist the Kasich administration as it takes the steps necessary to prepare for start-up of extension on January 1, 2014. We also recognize that legislative and legal challenges are possible and are prepared to address those as the need arises.

Medicaid extension is of high importance to our provider organizations and their workers. Many of our members' direct support professionals earn incomes under 138 percent of the federal poverty level and live without health care benefits. They live and work every day, being one serious illness or injury away from financial ruin. A large number of them almost certainly will qualify to receive life-altering Medicaid coverage. In addition, extension will bring relief to our providers, who were facing an Affordable Care Act mandate for employer-sponsored health care that is estimated to cost members \$20 million annually.

The debate over whether to expand Medicaid coverage was as healthy as it was hard-fought. OPRA believes that Governor Kasich and the Controlling Board have acted wisely and courageously and, without question, in the best interests of our fellow citizens.