

Reps. Yuko and McGregor, Nursing Home Residents Call for Medicaid Service Changes

COLUMBUS –Becky Metzler, a woman from Columbus who has been managing multiple sclerosis for 40 years, relies on a wheelchair as her sole mode of transportation. However, in 2009, as a result of legislation to bundle Medicaid services provided in nursing facilities, Becky was denied essential repairs to her wheelchair, a decision that negatively impacted her overall quality of life and ability to move about independently.

“My friends and family have carried many of the financial burdens in making sure my personal needs are met,” Metzler said. “However, they no longer have the resources to fill the gaps in services bundled under Medicaid. I am constantly anxious about my unpredictable future and fear I will not be able to receive the level of care that I need.”

On Thursday afternoon, Metzler gave a budget testimony opposing the consolidation of Medicaid services in nursing facilities, an issue that has previously been raised by State Representatives Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) and Ross McGregor (R-Springfield) in HB 156.

“As legislators we should be acutely aware of the impact this budget will have on every Ohioan, but we need to pay special attention to the people who use these nursing home services,” Rep. Yuko said. “These are quality of life issues that will disproportionately affect them if we don’t fix this. Frankly, it’s unacceptable for disabled Ohioans to be refused things like wheel chair maintenance, physical therapy or safe medical transportation. I know we can do better.”

“I believe that the testimony that was presented to the subcommittee yesterday demonstrates the urgent need for changes to be made to the bundling issue,” Rep. McGregor said. “This has had such a negative impact on both patients and the businesses which serve them and I believe it is imperative that reforms be initiated as soon as possible, either through the enactment on House Bill 156 or through corrective language being included in the budget bill.”

Oxygen, custom wheelchairs (including all parts, options, accessories, and repairs), skilled therapies (physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology/audiology), transportation (ambulance and ambulette), and some over-the-counter drugs are currently consolidated in nursing facilities due to provisions in the 2009 budget.

In addition to the current limitations in funding for nursing facilities, Governor Kasich’s budget is expected to cause further hardships for Ohio’s senior citizens. The budget includes cuts to services for senior citizens totaling nearly \$600 million – \$430 million in cuts to nursing homes and \$120 million in cuts to PASSPORT.