



Dear Senator Portman,

I write on behalf of the members of Ohio Farmers Union (OFU) who are engaged in all forms of family farming and ranching. The cost and availability of health care has long been a primary concern of OFU and we know that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is far from perfect, but the Graham-Cassidy bill does not address the challenges facing farmers and ranchers. Instead, the bill would make matters far worse, slashing healthcare funding in Ohio by \$9 billion from 2020 to 2026. We urge you to vote no on the legislation.

Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), OFU has worked diligently to help Farmers Union members and rural Ohioans take full advantage of the ACA's provisions. We know how important tax credits, premium subsidies, and subsidies for out-of-pocket costs can be in helping farm families access and maintain consistent coverage. The Graham-Cassidy proposal would cut each of those provisions and would allow insurance companies to charge older customers five times that of younger customers. These changes disproportionately affect farmers who are older, more injury prone, and endure higher levels of stress than average workers.

OFU is very concerned about the Graham-Cassidy bill's effects on the non-group marketplace. The plan would create even more uncertainty in Ohio's marketplace, driving insurers out of the state and forcing the remaining companies to increase premiums. The loss of marketplace subsidies in 2020 would make the problem even worse. As Governor Kasich has repeatedly called for, we need a bipartisan, common sense approach to fixing unstable marketplaces like Ohio's. Instead, this bill would leave the Ohio legislature to devise their own market-stabilizing plan in the face of annual budget decreases.

The Graham-Cassidy proposal would also make it easier to deny important protections and services to the two-thirds of farmers and ranchers who have a preexisting condition. The bill's changes to the 1332 waiver would allow states to change the definition of essential health benefits and to implement lifetime and annual limits. Losing those protections could make critical healthcare services and prescription drugs unaffordable, especially for those who struggle with chronic conditions.

Ending the Medicaid expansion would cost 700,000 Ohioans to lose their health coverage. Capping Medicaid payments or block granting those payments would have devastating consequences for rural hospitals, which are more dependent on Medicaid payments than their urban counterparts. When the Senate was considering the Better Care Reconciliation Act, the Ohio Hospital Association estimated that one-quarter of Ohio's hospitals would be at risk of closure if the ACA were repealed. The Graham-Cassidy bill would endanger our rural hospitals having wide-reaching impacts on rural communities.

OFU strongly opposes any cuts to healthcare funding as rural Ohio continues to struggle with the opioid epidemic. Yet, this bill would cut Ohio's healthcare funding by \$9 billion from 2020 to 2026 with even more dramatic cuts beginning in 2027. Of the 700,000 Ohioans who are covered under the Medicaid



expansion, 200,000 receive addiction treatment services. The Graham-Cassidy proposal would hamstring Ohio in its efforts to confront the opioid crisis gripping our rural communities.

Finally, the lack of transparency in this effort is not representative of Ohioan values. There have been no hearings on this bill, there will be no mark-up, and the CBO won't be able to provide a comprehensive score. This bill would have far-reaching impacts on farmers, ranchers and all Ohioans, but this process has robbed them of the opportunity to make their voices heard.

On numerous occasions, you have set aside partisan politics to do what's best for Ohioans. Graham-Cassidy is not in the best interests of Ohio's farm families. We urge you to vote no on the legislation and to engage in a bipartisan approach to improving our nation's healthcare system.

Sincerely,

Joseph Logan
President, Ohio Farmers Union