



**County
Commissioners
Association of Ohio**

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**CCAO Urges Support for Medicaid Expansion;
Comments on Other Provisions of Governor's Budget**

COLUMBUS – The County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) today reaffirmed its support for the expansion of Medicaid as proposed by Governor John Kasich. “After attending the State of State address in Lima, we are more convinced that Medicaid expansion is right for our communities, our hospitals and for those who need the services. While some may not like the Affordable Care Act, it is time to be pragmatic and be sure Ohio tax dollars return home to do good for our state,” said Gary Lee, President of the Association and a commissioner from Union County. “The Governor made a passionate and compelling argument last night, and we hope the legislature will give serious consideration to the Administration's proposal,” he continued.

The CCAO Board of Directors previously had adopted the position after reviewing a preliminary analysis of likely effects of an expansion presented by the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO). The presentation included results of a study conducted by HPIO, The Ohio State University, the Urban Institute, and REMI.

“After reviewing the likely effects of an expansion, it seems there are many winners. Between the positive impacts to the economy, the ability to get more people into preventative care rather than emergency room care, and providing a much needed boost to our behavioral health system, expansion seems like the common sense thing to do,” said CCAO Executive Director Larry Long, who attended the Governor's address with Lee.

When asked about other provisions in the proposed budget, Long said the budget was a “mixed bag” for counties. “We applaud the Governor for increasing state funding for mandated public defenders. Funding for the Local Government Fund will be stabilized and some growth will occur, but frankly, I was disappointed there was no restoration of this critical source of state funding given the disproportionate cuts that were imposed two years ago and the fact that the state's rainy day fund has swollen,” Long said.

Many counties are very concerned about the proposal to reduce county sales tax rates, all of which were locally enacted and many of which were approved by county voters. According to Long, “If the state can reduce county approved taxes at the time when it proposes to broaden the sales tax base, what is to stop it from reducing any locally enacted tax in the future?”

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According to Long, the three year moratorium on changing county sales tax rates is another problem for counties. "Some counties want the opportunity to renew expiring sales taxes. Others may need additional revenue during this three year period given the reduced level of state aide and lower than projected casino revenue. And still other counties may need to go to their voters to ask for approval of a tax increase to pay for a new jail, improvements to the courthouse, or other needed capital improvements," Long continued.

Another major concern for county commissioners is what happens at the end of the proposed three year moratorium. Counties now have the authority to enact a sales tax of up to 1.5%. "After the moratorium, we are not sure how much additional capacity counties will have to increase the rate of its sales tax after the rate has been cut by the state. The bottom line is that the proposal becomes a local control issue. It also potentially jeopardizes the ability of counties to balance their budgets provide both those services desired by county residents and those mandated by the state," Long concluded.

CCAO represents Ohio's 86 Boards of County Commissioners and the Cuyahoga and Summit County Executives and County Councils. CCAO promotes best practices in county government administration and management; advocates on behalf of counties at the State and Federal levels; provides training and technical assistance programs; and provides cost saving service programs for Ohio counties. For more information, visit www.ccao.org.

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