



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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House Agriculture Committee Summer Hearings

On Monday the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee began holding its summer hearings. House Agriculture Chairman [Brian Hill \(R-Zanesville\)](#) kicked off the first of five hearing with a visit to Ohio State University's College of Agricultural Engineering in Columbus.



Rep. Brian Hill

Agriculture groups and broadband advocates urged the House committee to help improve Internet access in rural parts of the state, saying it would allow more farmers to utilize technology to enhance their operations.

Derik Geitgey, of Mt. Vernon-based Ag Info Tech, LLC, briefed the committee on various technologies growers are using to become more efficient, profitable and environmentally responsible. Many of these technologies rely heavily on the Internet. Access to reliable internet is something that's not always available in many rural areas. Lawmakers, the witness said, could help secure reliable 4G speed Internet for the entire state.



Rep Margaret Ann Ruhl, OSU's Gwen Wolford, CCAO Staffer John Leutz & Rep Tony Burkley at the first Ohio House Agriculture & Rural Development regional hearing held at the OSU Agricultural Engineering Building in Franklin County. The Committee heard from witnesses on new and future agricultural technology.

Connect Ohio Executive Director Lindsay Shanahan also called for enhanced Internet access, saying how her organization, a subsidiary of Connected Nation, has seen how it could benefit several sectors of Ohio's economy, like agriculture.

CCAO strongly supports extension of reliable cell phone service and broadband capability throughout Ohio and has continually encouraged the General Assembly to identify and eliminate the barriers that limit access to these services because of their impact on attracting economic development.

Chairman Hill said connecting more Ohioans and farmers with adequate Internet remains a priority for

his panel. "The rural development side of the committee is trying to look at where we can help with that, especially when you get to southeast Ohio and the hills involved it's more of a challenge," he said in an interview with *Gongwer News*. "(There are) not as many users, so it's hard to make the economic case. We're trying to find ways we can enhance and give those people the same opportunities the rest of Ohio has."

The committee held its second hearing Wednesday at the OSU Agricultural Technical Institute in Wayne County (Wooster). The Committee heard from witnesses regarding educational opportunities in agriculture and mentoring the next generation of agricultural leaders.

The final three hearings:

- Rural/Economic Development - **Tuesday, September 1**, 1 p.m., at Kent State University, Salem Branch (2491 OH-45, Salem, OH 44460)
- Fertilizer Use and Crops - **Thursday, September 3**, 1 p.m., at Growing Acres Farm (7391 Monroe Central Road, Eldorado, Ohio 45321)
- Livestock - **Wednesday, September 9**, 1 p.m., at Green Valley Gathering Place (296 Green Valley Drive, Bidwell, OH 45614)

Should any commissioner wish to attend or testify at the final three hearings, please contact CCAO staffer Brian Mead at bmead@ccao.org or 614-579-2514.

Medicaid Oversight Committee Discusses Spending, MyCare

The Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee questioned Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) Director John McCarthy over a myriad of topics in a hearing Thursday.

While the topic of hearing was MyCare Ohio, committee members' questions spanned across topics such as overall Medicaid spending, the forecasting models ODM uses to project such spending, and the projected impact of potential marijuana legalization on the Medicaid program.

Overall Medicaid spending

Given a recent report issued by the state on overall Medicaid spending from SFY15, the committee had several questions and comments for Director McCarthy on the topic. Total spending on Medicaid in FY15 was \$1.9 billion lower than the original budget estimate, according to a recent report from ODM.

The expansion group was \$1.4 billion above the estimate as a result of the shift from traditional enrollment into the expansion group, but more than offset as a result of the traditional program's being \$3.4 billion below the original budget estimate. The original total estimated cost was \$25.4 billion, but the actual cost was \$23.5 billion.

Enrollment in the expansion group was 152,333 people more than the original estimate but was offset by traditional enrollment, which was 192,310 people fewer than the original estimate.

JMOC Committee members questioned if the outcome of SFY15 spending compared to projections highlights a need to improve forecasting. McCarthy responded that the models used by ODM are not wrong and are constantly being updated based on experience and being tweaked to reflect program and policy changes.

Sen. Bill Coley (R-Liberty Twp.), however, blasted the ODM for "tying up" \$600 million in state share due to its budget estimates. "We can't be off by that much, because that's \$600 million of tax cuts that didn't occur, that's \$600 million of school spending or for local governments -all kinds of things that didn't happen because we had money tied up," he said.

Director McCarthy agreed that the agency needs to continuously revise its models, but cautioned lawmakers about creating a situation where agencies feel pressured to spend money so they do not come in under budget.

"I hear your challenge and I accept the legislative body asking us to do better. Believe, me the governor is harder on me than the legislature is in eking out how to make the program better while providing the same level of services to people and improving health outcomes," the director added.

MyCare Ohio

ODM Director McCarthy shared that the monthly enrollment in the MyCare Ohio project (a program for individuals dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid in which benefits and services of the two programs are coordinated by one of the five Ohio Medicaid managed care plans), which was fully implemented in January, averaged 95,000 Ohioans across the five managed care plans. Nearly 5.5 million claims were processed and more than \$1.8 billion in claims payments had been paid to providers as of March, he added. Nearly 93% of claims were paid within 30 days among the plans - within federal prompt pay standards.

McCarthy also shared that the agency has made changes to the project's provider agreements, including: a requirement that managed care plans provide ODM with at least four months' notice when changing availability of providers serving 100 or more MyCare members; and updated standards around transportation to improve timeliness of pick-up and drop-off appointments. Other provider agreement changes, he said, would:

- Require transportation vendors to try to contact beneficiaries should they be unable to show up for pick-up and bar them from leaving a pick-up location prior to the scheduled pick-up time.
- Clarify requirements for payment of physician Medicaid claims.
- Strengthen Coordination of Benefits Agreement requirements for managed care plans to exchange files with federal officials verifying eligibility and accepting Medicare claims for Medicaid payment.
- Require plans to develop a methodology for assigning appropriate caseload sizes for care managers.

In response to a question from Senator Dave Burke (R-Marysville), McCarthy indicated that it is too early to tell if MyCare Ohio has led to anticipated cost savings, citing that at present ODM only has data as recent as January.

Marijuana legalization

On the topic of marijuana legalization, State Representative Robert Sprague (R-Findlay) asked Director McCarthy if the department had or will plan to account for the impact the potential legalization of marijuana in Ohio would have on Medicaid program spending.

McCarthy indicated that while the department had not yet run such projections, given the uncertainty until recently on whether or not the legalization measure would make the ballot, that he has spoken with other Medicaid directors in states that have approved marijuana legalization. As of 2014, the Colorado Medicaid Director shared with Director McCarthy that the state had yet to collect data to see if there was an increase in treatment or other expenses in the state's Medicaid program due to legalization.

Infant Mortality

Separately, Director McCarthy also shared some of the recent work by the state in targeted, high-risk communities throughout the state in regard to combatting infant mortality, and the Department's strategy to tie into existing community collaborative efforts in communities such as Columbus and Akron.

For more information on the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee, click [here](#) to view the Committee's website, or contact Laura Abu-Absi at labu-absi@ccao.org or (614) 221-562

Bill introduced to require electronic filing of campaign finance reports

[Sen. Frank LaRose](#) (R-Copley) has introduced [SB 206](#) which would require campaign finance reports to be filed electronically with county election boards. Those reports would then be made available to the public online.

Sen. LaRose said his bill is an attempt to update an outdated law and would bring more transparency to the local official election process. It would essentially mirror current practices by the secretary of state's office, which already accepts electronic filings from candidates for state office and makes those filings available to the public online. The bill would reduce needless paperwork for boards of elections, streamline filing requirements for candidates, and make campaign finance data easier to access for the public

"This bill will update Ohio's campaign finance law to allow local entities to join a system that has operated smoothly for 15 years," Sen. LaRose said in a statement. "There is no good reason to deny the public the opportunity to view local campaign finance reports online when state reports are already available."

Shawn Stevens, president of the Ohio Association of Election Officials and a member of the Delaware County elections board, said in the release that the bill is the next step in an ongoing effort to modernize the election system and described the bill as common sense legislation.

Bills Introduced



SB 206 **CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTS** ([LaRose, F.](#)) To require certain campaign committees and other entities to file campaign finance statements electronically and to require the Secretary of State to make the information in those statements available online. Am. 3517.10, 3517.105, 3517.106, 3517.1011, and 3517.11

HB 304 **WATER RESERVOIRS** ([Leland, D.](#), [Stinziano, M.](#)) To eliminate law authorizing the maintenance of buffers around municipal water reservoirs by contiguous property owners. Am. 743.50

Hearing Schedule



Tuesday, September 1

House Agriculture & Rural Development ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Hill, B.](#), 644-6014), Kent State University, Salem Branch, 2491 OH 45, Salem, 1:00 pm

- Rural/Economic Development

Thursday, September 3

House Agriculture & Rural Development ([Committee Record](#)), (Chr. [Hill, B.](#), 644-6014), Growing Acres Farm, 7391 Monroe Central Road, Eldorado, 1:00 pm

- Fertilizer use & crops

House Healthcare Efficiencies Summer Study Committee, (Chr. [Huffman, S.](#), 466-9624), ProMedica Flower Hospital Administration, Conference Center Room E, 5200 Harroun Road, Sylvania, 1:30 pm

- Graduate Medical Education Panel Discussion

Tuesday, September 8

House Healthcare Efficiencies Summer Study Committee, (Chr. [Huffman, S.](#), 466-9624), Shawnee State University, 940 2nd St., Portsmouth, 1:00 pm  (Updated: 8:18 a.m., August 20, 2015)

- Behavioral health