



CITY OF CLEVELAND

Mayor Justin M. Bibb

PUBLIC HEALTH

## Cleveland Department of Public Health

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**For Immediate Release**  
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Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga has released an informational one-pager to update the public on the impact that changes to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and AIDS Drug Assistance Programs will have on those living with HIV and their ability to access lifesaving medications. The local community and Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga work together to better understand and find solutions to impacts of coming changes in Medicaid on the HIV community. City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County leaders joined the [Fast-Track Cities](#) in June of 2023, dedicated to ending the HIV epidemic by 2030. Mayors and other municipal officials designate their cities Fast-Track Cities by signing the *Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities Ending the HIV Epidemic*, which launched in 2014.

Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga are local people living with HIV/AIDS, community activists, HIV/AIDS service professionals, public health officials, physicians, pharmacists and other medical providers. The group has been meeting consistently since June to understand the coming changes and to advocate for protecting access to medications and care. The 2025 Federal Budget legislated changes in eligibility for Medicaid. Changes included work requirements and the end of Medicaid expansion coverage in Ohio.

The Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga group has provided status updates and elevated their concerns to Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne and City of Cleveland Mayor, Justin Bibb. Both elected officials have expressed their support and commitment to supporting the community and both have a deep grasp of the severity of the changes to Medicaid. County Executive Ronayne pledged his support by appointing a member of Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga to his Medicaid Access Team, committing to strong public advocacy, policy engagement and collaborative planning. For his part, Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb assured Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga that he supports their work by making the City's stance on Medicaid expansion, the Affordable Care Act and SNAP benefits known. He also plans to focus public health resources and community partnerships on mitigating negative outcomes of the coming changes.

The public informational one-pager provides statistics that put the needs of those in Northeast Ohio impacted by HIV into perspective. According to the status update of the 5,000 plus individuals with HIV in Cuyahoga County, upwards of 1,500 rely on Medicaid for their care. Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga is concerned that the new requirements may mean many people will lose that coverage, and other assistance programs such as Ryan White will be squeezed, and unable to care for more people. Community Activist and leader ACT UP Cleveland Gil Kudrin states, "Our goal is to get meds into bodies." Effective prevention of new HIV infections is helping people with HIV to receive treatment that suppresses the virus. An essential strategy for HIV prevention is





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U=U, Undetectable = Untransmittable. Professionals fear this strategy will suffer grave setbacks due to changes to Medicaid.

Advocate Naimah O'Neal voiced her concerns, "I've lived with the virus for 34 years. I have come to realize man is the problem, not the virus! People are still fearful of people with HIV there is stigma. Young people still are kicked out of their homes for who they love and especially if they have HIV. There is stigma against women living with this virus who have children, people living with HIV can be jailed and criminalized. There are lifesaving medications and treatments available, but we keep seeing barriers put in the way of accessing those treatments. These changes to Medicaid will be a huge barrier for people. We should be loving each other, not judging each other!"

The status update attached to this release will be available on the Cleveland Department of Public Health's webpage. These concerns come at a time when HIV/AIDS funding is threatened, other states are seeing cuts to their AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, and coverage through the ACA Marketplace has increased in cost. Participants of Fast Track Cleveland Cuyahoga are available for comment or questions; Lita Wills, Cleveland Department of Public Health, Julie Patterson, AIDS Funding Collaborative, Zachary Levar, Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Gil Kudrin, ACT UP Cleveland, and Naimah O'Neal, Community Advocate

### **About Cuyahoga County Board of Health**

*The Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) provides services to more than 875,000 residents and businesses throughout Cuyahoga County. Accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board in 2019, CCBH is locally and nationally recognized for excellence. Under the leadership of Dr. Rod Harris, CCBH staff are committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, implementing an array of community-driven strategies to improve health. Current programs and partners include Creating Healthy Communities, Maternal and Child Health, Ohio Equity Institute, and Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health. CCBH's organizational vision is to create the conditions in which all people who live, learn, work and play in Cuyahoga County have the opportunity to be healthy. Learn more at [ccbh.net](http://ccbh.net).*

### **About Cleveland Department of Public Health**

*The Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH) is committed to improving the quality of life of City residents by promoting healthy behavior, protecting the environment, preventing disease, and making the City a healthy place to live, work, and play. As the local public health agency for the City of Cleveland, CDPH offers a range of programs, including clinical, environmental, health promotion, and population-based services. Our mission is to promote and protect the health and well-being of residents, communities, and partners in the City of Cleveland. Our vision is to be the most responsive, trusted, and impactful health department in the country. For more information, please visit [ClevelandOhio.gov/City-Hall/Departments/Public-Health](http://ClevelandOhio.gov/City-Hall/Departments/Public-Health).*

