



Wednesday, March 15, 2017

The Honorable Mark Romanchuk
77 S. High St., District 02
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Romanchuk,

On behalf of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, I am writing the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services to encourage the committee to support the budget of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. As you know, the DD Council is created by federal law and charged with advocacy, capacity building, and system change activities that contribute to a coordinated, consumer-centered, consumer-directed, and comprehensive system of community services, individualized supports and other assistance that enable individuals with developmental disabilities to exercise self-determination, be independent, be productive, and be integrated and included in all facets of community life.

The Ohio DD Council consists of 30 members, a majority of whom are adults with developmental disabilities, and family members of young children and adults with developmental disabilities. These individuals and family members come from all walks of life and share their experience with the Council on a variety of developmental disabilities, including autism and autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities, just to name a few. The Ohio DD Council represents a unique voice in the developmental disability system. The Council is a microcosm of the varying stakeholders in the DD System: self-advocates, family members, county boards, providers, state agencies, non-profits, and DD Act partners.

These members and the members representing state agencies serving people with disabilities voted unanimously at our March meeting to support the Department of Developmental Disabilities budget as proposed by Governor John Kasich. Specifically, the Council encourages the subcommittee and the full House to support the funding levels proposed and to avoid using funds dedicated to reducing the waiting list, transitioning individuals to community settings, providing support for individuals with complex behavioral and physical needs, increasing support for direct support professionals, and addressing the funding formula for Intermediate Care Facilities for other purposes.

The proposed funding levels and program improvements included as part of the as-introduced version of House Bill 49 represents many of the system change and capacity building activities the Ohio DD Council has supported through our Five-Year Plan on Developmental Disabilities. The Council has funded

grant programs to understand how to address the waiting list for waivers, improve the quality and care provided by direct support professionals, increase opportunities for individuals to transition to the community, and improve community employment options for individuals with disabilities. These activities, however, can only show a better way forward. It is up to you to support this path through the programs and services contained as part of the state budget.

As the subcommittee witnessed as part of the last state operating budget, there is no lack of variety in the positions and viewpoints of stakeholders in the developmental disabilities system. Support for community employment comes with concerns about a loss of sheltered workshops, and efforts to clarify the rights of families is met with opposition by self-advocates. Our system consists of an ever-changing landscape of viewpoints and opinions. But one consistent viewpoint held by all stakeholders is that our system should be strong and able to support individuals in the least-restrictive setting of their choice. The Ohio DD Council believes this budget makes progress toward that goal.

Last week, nearly 500 individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members packed the Statehouse atrium to celebrate the 31st annual Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. I hope you had an opportunity to meet with folks from your district and to hear how their lives are impacted by programs and services provided through a county board of developmental disabilities or through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. The day was a triumph for self-advocates because they got to see and hear from their peers with disabilities, including young Zayne Harshaw who showed how the proper supports can help individuals pursue their dreams and lead a fulfilling life. House Bill 49 continues that vision of support.

Thank you for your consideration. While the Council is not testifying, we are happy to answer any questions you may have. Please direct inquiries to Paul Jarvis at paul.jarvis@dodd.ohio.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Knight". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carolyn Knight
Executive Director