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26th District

House State and Local Government Committee  
Chairman Anielski

Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 144  
October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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Chairman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 144, which looks to modernize Ohio's Disabilities Commission.

Ohio currently has 45 individuals on three separate bodies representing individuals with disabilities. Ohio is the only state in the country still using the commission structure. Despite the progresses we have made in recent years in vocational rehab programs, these three bodies have remained unchanged. With the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities' inclusion as a cabinet level agency, a clearer and more effective streamlined approach is necessary.

Senate Bill 144 will integrate 3 governmental bodies - the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Commission, Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC), and the Governor's Council in People with Disabilities (GCPD) - into a single, more inclusive State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) that will provide streamlined feedback to OOD on Vocational Rehab

services. This Council will require at least 15 members appointed by the Governor. The Council will represent a cross section of the disabilities community. Those who have difficulty representing themselves will make up a majority of the members on the Council. The remainder of the membership will include members of the business community, partner agencies, and a vocational rehab counselor.

Disability Rights Ohio (DRO), a non-profit organization that advocates for the civil and legal rights of people with disabilities in Ohio, as well as many other important groups that represent Ohioans with disabilities have voiced their support for moving to a SRC model. OOD is also supportive of the move to this model. At full participation (15 members replacing the current 45 member structure) the State will save, annually, an estimated \$33,300.

Modernizing Ohio's government structure to more efficiently and effectively serve all our constituents has been a priority for the last few General Assemblies, as well as our Governor and his administration. Allowing for greater access and greater awareness for our disabled constituents, while saving taxpayer dollars, fits under this goal.

The version passed by the Senate incorporates a sub bill which allows the Governor to have the authority, not the Executive Director, to appoint members to the Council. Among other changes, the sub bill also removed the requirement that the Governor select a Council chairperson and shifted that responsibility to the Council itself. This was one of many suggestions by DRO that improved the original version of the bill.

Thank you again Chairman Anielski and members of the committee for allowing me to speak to this bill. I urge your support for the SRC and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.