



House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Testimony on HB 166
Superintendent Jed Morison, Franklin County Board of DD
Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities
4/8/19

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities. My name is Jed Morison, and I serve as the Superintendent of the Franklin County Board of DD.

The operating budget proposed by Governor DeWine demonstrates his committed support for Ohio's most vulnerable populations as well as his willingness to accept input from community stakeholders, and those of us in the developmental disabilities field are grateful. This budget provides needed spending on a number of priority initiatives and includes policies that will protect public health and safety, ensure efficient and sustainable service delivery, and increase access to services in the community.

The inability to find direct support staff and to retain them for any reasonable period is a key barrier to community integration for people with developmental disabilities across Ohio. A central component of the Department of Developmental Disabilities portion of the budget is an investment in the direct support provider (DSP) workforce. The Department and county boards are working as partners, each paying an equal share, to increase the reimbursement rate for DSPs to begin to raise wages to levels that can compete in today's crowded employment market. This rate increase is the first step to addressing high turnover rates in this demanding profession and curtailing a workforce crisis that threatens to upend our community service delivery model.

Historically, transportation has been another barrier to integration. This budget supports an ongoing effort of modernizing our Non-Medical Transportation (NMT) program by providing \$5 million to fund a change to the state's NMT reimbursement rate structure. The new rate will incentivize a transition from large vehicle service to and from a central location to more flexible transportation options utilizing smaller vehicles to offer tailored, on-demand service. This type of service allows people to make meaningful choices about how to live their lives and opens up options for community employment and increased participation as full community members.

When the health and safety of a person with a developmental disability is in jeopardy, county boards and the department should be able to take immediate action to remove that

person from harm's way. That is why the Governor included provisions in this budget that allow the Director of Developmental Disabilities to summarily suspend a provider's certification prior to notice and hearing when a risk of immediate and serious harm exists. This language is based on the recommendations of a workgroup that was created by the last General Assembly in HB 49 to study ways county boards can better identify and respond to health and safety risks.

County boards strive to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. In an effort to promote further fiscal accountability, one component of HB 166 will require county boards to annually submit 5-year projections of their finances to the Department of Developmental Disabilities. OACB is conceptually supportive of 5-year forecasts, and we are looking forward to continuing our work with the Department and the legislature on this issue.

Governor DeWine's commitment to young people is evident throughout his inaugural budget, and we applaud his attention to the issue of Ohio's multi-system youth. When children and teens have complex needs that exceed any single agency's jurisdiction and ability to offer supports, they may get shuttled back and forth from agency to agency with an unacceptable number ending up in the juvenile justice system because a more appropriate option was not available or could not be agreed upon by local partners. OACB supports increased funding and other initiatives to provide those options for high-needs youth.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to share our overall support for the provisions in Governor DeWine's budget. On behalf of OACB, I encourage you to maintain the appropriations and policy goals proposed by the executive. We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks as you seek to refine the bill, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.