

## Testimony on HB 166

### House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Dear Chairman Romanchuck, Ranking Member West, and esteemed committee members,

**I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on HB 166. My name is Diane Beastrom, President & CEO of Koinonia Homes, Inc., provider of services to over 600 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in seven counties, with our home base being Cuyahoga County.**

Koinonia is a not for profit agency that has served citizens with IDD since 1974. Our services include ICF, residential waiver, shared living, day array, vocational training, career services, transitional youth services and transportation. We employ 620 staff; the vast majority are Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

**I am very grateful for and supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities.** With these budget initiatives and the leadership of Director Davis, I am hopeful our service system can make positive strides toward the goal of stabilizing the DSP workforce, which is now in crisis. Staff turnover and vacancy rates continue to increase and are disruptive to the lives of the very people we serve. Too often we are forced to decline serving a new individual because we just don't know if we will be able to adequately staff the setting. This is of great concern to families and individuals who turn to the provider community to assist them during their most stressful times and not find a solution.

**I am submitting testimony for these reasons:**

**First, I want to show support for the attention given in the budget to increase DSP wages in HCBS funded services.** While I am grateful for the proposed budget investment in moving toward a more appropriate wage for DSPs, a wage target of \$13.00 per hour initially and moving to \$15.00 per hour is essential for DSPs across service settings and funding streams. DSPs work with individual people, wherever he/she may live or work, regardless of the funding stream. Those with IDD rely on DSPs for their most basic and personal of needs to be met. Their care is highly complex and requires consistency in staffing to ensure the best possible outcomes. DSPs state the reason they stay in the field is their genuine affection for the people they support and their ability to change lives. Regrettably, too often, those same DSPs either must find other employment or must work multiple jobs just to make ends meet.

**Second, I want to show my support for the proposed increased funding for HCBS services provided on-site, on-call.** The current rate is based on minimum wage rates from 2005 and must be re-based. DSPs working on-site, on-call must be paid at least minimum wage yet every hour of service provided results in a substantial financial loss to the provider, which is unsustainable. The proposed increased funding will go far to protect this service going forward.

**Finally, I want to show my support for the funding included in the transportation budget.** Koinonia provides an array of transportation services, from nonmedical transportation in modified vehicles to transportation in sedans and mini-vans. In 2018 alone, we transported people well over 300,000 miles. People with IDD want the opportunity to be active members in their communities, pursuing interests, recreation, and jobs of their choosing. Adequate funding for transportation services makes this possible. Community integration is an important part of the day service program; however, no funding is available for transportation once the individual arrives at the program site. This must change, and the budget initiative addresses this need. In 2018, Koinonia clients contributed 2000 hours volunteering in the community and over 50 people were successfully placed in community employment. Transportation is necessary for these successes to continue.

**Thank you again for the privilege to share my thoughts with you. Please let me know if I can be of any help during this process.**

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Beastrom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Diane Beastrom  
President & CEO  
Koinonia Homes, Inc.  
216-262-0813  
[diane.beastrom@koinoniahomes.org](mailto:diane.beastrom@koinoniahomes.org)