



THE FUSE NETWORK

providing services for HWI, LICCO & MSI

**Testimony on HB 166
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee**

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

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Mary Thompson-Hufford and I am the CEO of The Fuse Network, and we support people in Coshocton, Licking and Muskingum Counties. We are a not for profit organization that provides supports to more than 400 people each year through day array, transportation, OOD and residential services. When I became the CEO back in 2010, we supported people in the workshop and operated a lawn crew and janitorial crew.

As an organization we are learning how to support people in new ways. I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine, Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities, and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities because it supports our mission of helping people have better lives.

I am testifying before you to share the pattern and impact that our organization has experienced. We have seen a reduced reliance on paid services as a direct result of the growth within the individuals served and the phenomenal work of the teams.

This is a direct result of the professionalism, passion and vision of our DSP's. Transformation is hard for everyone but with the results driven solution oriented DSP amazing success stories happen often.

Lindsey is an example of the success that can be achieved. Lindsey used to receive paid supports 24/7. Due to positive choices that she made and tremendous resilience of her DSP's to not give up she now lives independently in an apartment, works at Wendy's and only receives periodic weekly HPC and transportation services.

Michael is another individual that transitioned from day services to competitive employment. He works full time at Fanatics and has a part-time job at Arby's. He values his Arby's discount and likes to stop there for dinner sometimes on his way home.

Chad is another person that receives support from our organization. Chad's story of success is different. Against medical odds, he is alive and his DSP and family do their best everyday to support a life of enjoyment. Chad enjoys walking with his DSP at our local fitness track and sometimes the guys that play soccer take a little time out of their day and kick the ball with Chad. Although Chad doesn't use words to express his delight everyone can see that he appreciates being part of the fun.

April 8th, 2019

Testimony

I could easily talk for hours about the impact quality services have on the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I know time is limited but I want to share quickly about Rosanna. Rosanna and her family were not interested in employment they were happy with her being happy being happy and well cared for in day services. Rosanna was encouraged by DSP's to try some new experiences in the community. She volunteered at Clary Garden and seemed to really enjoy it. She actually received a job offer but declined because her family was concerned about safety. This experience however, of hearing that Rosanna was a valuable asset to an employer gave them the courage to accept an OOD referral. Rosanna now works at Der Dutchman a place that her and her family feels is a great fit.

The proposed increase for DSP will help recruit and retain professionals that make a difference every day! Thank you for responding to the need and I ask that you continue in future budget cycles to further support reimbursement rates that support a more sustainable system of support.

As I shared the stories about people moving forward out of extensive paid supports, one of the key ingredients of each of these stories is the experiences they gained in the community. Providing day services in the community is not the same as providing supports in a facility based settings. Ratios can not be maintained at the same level. Groups must be smaller to support safety and effectiveness of community engagement. When our team talks about community integration we are not talking about trips to McDonalds or mall walking. We are committed to finding matches that connect people with opportunities that support their outcome and passions and whenever possible reduce their reliance on paid supports.

I strongly request that the funds outlined for transportation remain in the budget to support community integration for people in day services. Although DSP are the critical component of service delivery, the budget line item for transportation supports the service delivery of the DSP as well as the desire of people to be part of their local communities.

Finally, I want to show my support for Director Millers budget initiatives. The partnership with OOD and DoDD is critical in helping people gain and retain competitive employment. 127 people have accepted employment in Coshocton, Licking and Muskingum as a result of our service delivery since 2017. Some of the people we help obtain jobs don't receive job retention support while others receive transportation support to/from their job. We support more than 100 people with long term job retention.

I appreciate the rate increases as proposed in Direct Miller's budget. Our team is committed to helping people with more significant barriers gain and retain competitive employment.

Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process please let me know.

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