



REM Ohio
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May 15, 2019

Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

Chairperson Hackett and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am Buffie LaBelle and writing to provide testimony on behalf of REM Ohio where I serve as the Eastern Regional Director. In the Eastern part of Ohio, REM provides services and supports to approximately 280 people with developmental disabilities in a variety of settings (waiver group homes, day programs, ICF's, foster care (Ohio Shared Living), and supports those living on their own or with family. We provide these supports with 435 staff, including 405 DSPs.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Governor DeWine, Director Davis, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Ohio House of Representatives who, separately and collectively, have made an unprecedented investment in services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am appreciative of the administration's proposal to invest in the homemaker/personal care service to help increase the average wage of DSPs providing that service. I am even more appreciative for the commitment from your colleagues in the House to build off of the DeWine Administration's executive budget to further increase the average wage of a DSP providing the homemaker/personal care service. Our DSP's are the back bone of our agency and most of them have to work multiple jobs, or put in countless hours of overtime to make ends meet. Our DSP's are responsible for the lives of the people we support and must take great care to ensure they are providing proper supervision, passing medications, administering treatments, all while helping to add value to the lives of those they support. They also know they can go to many other fields (food service, retail, etc.) and make MORE money with far less responsibility. Our staff turnover rates, at all levels, are the highest they have ever been. The increases in this budget make it easier for our committed staff to stay and maintain the relationships they have worked to build with the people they support. This results in better services, stronger relationships, and a higher quality of life for the

people we support, and our staff. As an agency committed to providing services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the investment helps ensure my agency can continue to provide our array of services.

The developmental disabilities services field is in agreement on the direction and actions to be taken to increase our support and positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their valued DSPs. This is a compliment to the current administration under Governor DeWine, self-advocates, parents, families, county boards, private providers, and the Ohio House and Senate. On behalf of my agency, my staff, and the individuals we support, I encourage you, Senator Burke and Members of this Committee, to support the proposed budget provisions relevant to the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Together we will succeed.

Respectfully Submitted,



Buffie LaBelle, REM OHIO