



FINANCE COMMITTEE

WITNESS FORM

COMMITTEE DATE: 6/5/2019

NAME: Gary Tonks

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ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING: The Arc of Ohio

TESTIFYING ON BILL NUMBER: HB 166

TESTIMONY TYPE: VERBAL AND WRITTEN

TESTIFYING AS: PROPONENT

FOR BUDGET TESTIMONY ONLY:

TESTIMONY TOPIC: - SELECT -

TESTIFYING ON BUDGET ITEM(S): DODD Direct Support Wages, Disability Rights O

DID YOU TESTIFY IN A SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE? NO

ARE YOU A REGISTERED LOBBYIST? NO

SPECIAL REQUESTS:

- SUBMIT -

Written testimony is a public record and may be posted on the Ohio Senate's website.



For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

June 5, 2019

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Gary Tonks. I am the CEO of The Arc of Ohio. The Arc of Ohio is Ohio's oldest and largest advocacy organization, representing approximately 300,000 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. We are the founder of most services to Ohioans with developmental disabilities and exist to protect their civil rights and promote their general welfare wherever they live, work or are educated.

I am here today to support efforts to raise the wage of direct support staff, working with our constituents in the Department of Developmental Disabilities Waiver and Intermediate Care Facility programs. I have been a direct support staff. I have walked in those shoes; and, I can tell you from personal experience that direct support staff are the most valuable components of the DD Service Delivery System. As a representative of families who have loved ones with developmental disabilities I can tell you that we entrust the care and safety of our loved ones who currently make such a low wage they often qualify for government assistance.

Yet, they are there when we, as families, cannot be. They are there when our loved ones need comfort. They are there when our loved ones need dressed and showered and fed and calmed. They are there to provide support so our loved ones can access the community; and, participate as full citizens of Ohio. And, they do so while worrying how they will care for their own families. An average hourly wage of \$13, as proposed in the amended budget, will provide at least an incentive for our direct care staff to continue to support our loved ones. Many have never seen an increase in salary other than that required by increases in the minimum wage. The proposed increase lets them know that they have not been forgotten and reinforces our belief that, yes, we, as Ohioans, do value you.

The Arc of Ohio established most services in Ohio for children and adults with developmental disabilities. This includes, with our sister chapters across the country, the adoption of the Developmental Disabilities Act, which created Developmental Disabilities Councils, University Centers of Excellence like the Nisonger Center at The Ohio State University and Protection and Advocacy organizations such as Disability Rights Ohio (DRO).

DRO, as it is commonly known, protects the legal and civil rights of our loved ones in Ohio. The Arc of Ohio has worked hand in hand this organization. They have our full support. Our members are charter members of DRO and we urge you to support them as they continue to support our loved ones. They are a valuable member of our advocacy team. We continue to move forward because of DRO and we stand with them as they protect the legal and civil rights of our loved ones.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am available to any questions you may have.

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