



Ohio Senate
Subcommittee on Health, Human Services and
Medicaid Chairperson Senator Robert Hackett

Chairperson Hackett:

My name is Than Johnson and I am representing the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA). I also serve as the CEO of CRSI, a non-profit Provider of services for nearly 700 individuals with disabilities in the great state of Ohio.

OPRA represents 160 private provider organizations serving 32,000 individuals with disabilities with a valued workforce of DSPs of over 24,000.

As a statewide association, we join other associations and individuals in supporting DODD and its Director, Jeff Davis; Governor Mike DeWine; and the Ohio House of Representatives in supporting the current recommended state budget parameters.

The following will be various supported initiatives from DODD that assist individuals with disabilities to live and work in Ohio and to address a major workforce crisis. The solutions to the workforce crisis is not just one central item, but also a combination of various recommendations.

The primary solution, wages and benefits, was addressed in both the administration's and the Ohio House's budget recommendations.

OPRA is appreciative and supportive of the Ohio House's increase of the DSP average wage to \$13.00. This is a major step in providing the Ohio private providers with the ability to recruit, train, and retain a valued workforce. OPRA also will assure that our workforce through reporting documents to DODD and random samplings if needed will receive those wage increases.

We are also supportive of removing barriers to employment such as requiring a GED and age restrictions for high school students seeking employment with supervision.

OPRA also supports the use of both remote technology and using technology to assist individuals with disabilities to be successful in employment as DSP's.

OPRA supports initiatives that assists citizens currently on federal and state assistance to enter into our workforce and receive medical benefits, therefore, no longer needed public assistance.

We agree with Director Davis in increasing the 'On-site, On-call' rate increase so it complies with Ohio current minimum wage.

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OPRA is in favor of Director Davis ensuring that the current ICFIID reimbursement formula within state statute will run in accordance to that statute for the next two (2) years, therefore assuring private providers of resources in that program to increase wages and benefits.

We are also in support of increasing the 'franchise fee' and directing that additional federal funds to assisting in the provision of services for citizens (child and adult) challenged with severe behavior issues within the ICFIID system.

We strongly request additional funding for day service staff and programs that assist in community integration for individuals with disabilities.

OPRA is also supportive of Non-Medical Transportation proposal (NMT) reached by the various associations and DODD. It was somewhat changed in the House and now requires an additional study committee, which we are supportive, if it assists in reaching a conclusion as quickly as possible and retains the current funding levels.

OPRA remains concerned with the future implementation of the federal required EVV system, which has many state and national challenges.

OPRA pledges to work closely with ODM Director, Maureen Corcoran on reaching solutions and reducing the burdensome documentation/reporting actions that could result in major reduction to utilization rates.

OPRA is very optimistic about the initiatives of the current administration and stays united with other state associations and DODD in ensuring a positive, forward moving plan to meet the needs of Ohio citizens with disabilities and their DSPs.

Thank you for providing OPRA with this opportunity to speak in front of this subcommittee.

Respectfully submitted,

Than Johnson, OPRA