

**Abby Rampe, Program Manager, Community Engagement, Best Buddies Ohio  
Alex Rogers, Ambassador and Best Buddies Ohio State University Participant  
Testimony before the 2019 Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid  
April 16, 2019**

Hello. My name is Abby Rampe, and I am the Program Manager for Best Buddies. Founded in 1989, Best Buddies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide opportunities for one-to-one friendships, leadership development, integrated employment, and inclusive living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, we deliver our unique inclusion programs to over 1,100 Ohioans with and without disabilities through Best Buddies chapters in 21 schools throughout the State.

Interacting socially with others can be one of the greatest sources of joy and satisfaction in our lives, yet adults with developmental disabilities face isolation and exclusion from mainstream society.

After a person with a developmental disability ages-out of the education system, “their interactions are limited to relatives, other people with IDD and paid caregivers” (Robertson, et al., 2001). This isolation results in a “reported significantly higher levels of personal loneliness.” (Sheppard-Jones, Prout & Kleinert, 2005) In fact, because of the isolation they face, adults with developmental disabilities often lack the social skills and confidence necessary to seek employment.

According to National Core Indicators, an estimated 81% of adults (18+) with developmental disabilities do not have a paid job in the community. According to the Workforce Integration Task Force Final Report to Governor John R. Kasich, one of the recommended strategies to removing barriers to employment of people with disabilities was: “The state of Ohio should seek out ways to more effectively build a culture of inclusion and accessibility...through the development of mentoring and relationship-building opportunities” (<http://ood.ohio.gov/>).

Best Buddies provides a unique, time-tested inclusion services that eases the impact of the social and physical barriers that have isolated Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Securing support from the state of Ohio would empower Best Buddies to fill a gap in school and community-based inclusion services offered to Ohioans. We seek an appropriation of \$250,000 each year of the biennium to double the amount of children and adults served through these programs.

Specifically, we seek an appropriation of \$75,000 through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to serve adults with IDD through our college and community-based programs and an appropriation of \$175,000 through the Department of Education to serve youth with IDD through our elementary, middle, and high school programs. Overall, these funds would enable Best Buddies to serve 2,200 participants through 42 Best Buddies chapters by the end of the biennium.

Thank you.

**Alex Rogers, Ambassador and College School Friendship Chapter Participant, Best Buddies Ohio State University**

Hi, my name is Alex Rogers. I go to Ohio State University.

I am a part of the Best Buddies chapter there.

I love Best Buddies because I have made friends and I have grown as a leader.

I have made one of my *best* friends, Sharla Thomas. She is always there for me.

I was able to go to the Best Buddies Leadership Conference in Bloomington, Indiana. I have worked on my public speaking skills, and I have been able to speak at many events.

Ohio needs more Best Buddies chapters because everyone should have the chance to have these kinds of opportunities.

Thank you very much.