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Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

Chairperson Hackett and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am Janelle Wehrman and I am writing to provide testimony on behalf of Mercer Residential Services, Inc. where I serve as the CEO. Mercer Residential Services provides home maker / personal care services to 65 individuals who have an intellectual disability. We provide services to individuals who live on their own as well as individuals who reside in small group homes. We also provide vocational and recreational service to individuals. We have 57 employees who provide services in Mercer, Auglaize and Van Wert Counties.

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. By raising the average DSP wage, Mercer Residential Services DSPs will be able to pay their bills, i.e., utilities, child care, car payments and auto insurance. By having a car they can drive they will be able to continue to provide transportation for the individuals we serve. Many of Mercer Residential Services DSPs are single parents who struggle daily finding a child care provider they trust and one that they can afford as most of the hours we need DSPs working is on a second and third shifts. By

maintaining DSPs, the individuals we serve will have consistent staff and as a result they will receive better care as our DSPs will be able to build a long trusting relationship with each individual and they will know how to work with each of the individuals we serve. 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 Hackett and Members of this Committee, to support the proposed budget provisions relevant to the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Together we will succeed.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janelle Wehrman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Janelle Wehrman, CEO

Mercer Residential Services, Inc.