



Ohio Senate  
Finance Committee  
May 28, 2019

Chairperson Dolan and Esteemed Senate Finance Committee Members

My name is Diane Beastro, President & CEO of Koinonia Homes, Inc., provider of services to over 600 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in seven counties, with our home base being Cuyahoga County. Koinonia is a not for profit agency that has served citizens with IDD since 1974. Our services include ICF, residential waiver, shared living, day array, vocational training, career services and transportation. We employ 620 staff; the vast majority are Direct Support Professionals (DSP).

Koinonia Homes joins other providers and individuals supporting the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) and its Director Davis, Governor Mike DeWine; and the Ohio House of Representatives in supporting the current recommendation parameters within the state budget.

With these budget initiatives and the leadership of Director Davis, we are hopeful our service system can make positive strides toward the goal of stabilizing the DSP workforce. Staff turnover and vacancy rates continue to increase and are disruptive to the lives of the very people we serve. Too often we are faced with declining to serve an individual because we just don't know if we will be able to adequately staff the setting. This is of great concern to families and individuals who turn to the provider community to assist them during their most stressful times and not find a solution.

Koinonia Homes is appreciative and supportive of the Ohio House's increase to bring the average wage of DSP's to \$13.00 per hour. This is a major step in providing us the ability to recruit, train and train a valued DSP workforce. The individuals with IDD rely on DSPs for their most basic and personal of needs to be met. Their care is highly complex and requires consistency in staffing to ensure the best possible outcomes. DSPs state the reason they stay in the field is their genuine affection for the people they support and their ability to change lives. Regrettably, too often, those same DSPs either cannot afford to continue employment or must work multiple jobs just to make ends meet. DSPs work with individual people, wherever he/she may live or work, regardless of the funding stream.

Koinonia Homes is supportive of removing the barriers to employment such as requiring a GED and age restrictions for high school students seeking employment with supervision.

Koinonia Homes supports the proposed increased funding for HCBS services provided on-site, on-call. The current rate is based on minimum wage rates from 2005 and must be re-based. DSPs working on-site, on-call must be paid at least minimum wage and every hour of service results in a financial loss to the provider, which is unsustainable. The proposed increased funding will go far to protect this service going forward.

Koinonia Homes supports the use of both remote technology and using technology to assist with our individuals with disabilities to be more successful in employment as DSP's

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

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

Koinonia Homes also supports the increase of the “franchise fee” and directing the additional federal funds to assist in the provision of services for citizens (child and adult) challenged with severe behavior issues within the ICFIID system.

Koinonia Homes strongly requests additional funding for day service staff and programs that assist in community integration for individuals with disabilities.

Koinonia Homes is in support of the funding included in the transportation budget. Koinonia provides an array of transportation services, from non-medical transportation in modified vehicles to transportation in sedans and mini vans. In 2018 alone, we transported people well over 300,000 miles. People with IDD want the opportunity to be active members in their communities, pursuing interests, recreation, and jobs of their choosing. Adequate funding for transportation services makes this possible. Community integration is an important part of the day service program; however, no funding is available for transportation once the individual arrives at the program site. This must change, and the budget initiative addresses this need. In 2018, Koinonia clients contributed 2000 hours volunteering in the community and over 50 people were successfully placed in community employment. Transportation is necessary for these successes to continue.

Koinonia Homes is concerned with the future implementation of the federal required EVV system, which as many state and national challenges.

Koinonia Homes 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.

Koinonia Homes is very optimistic about the initiatives of our current administration and stays united with other providers and DODD in ensuring positive, forward moving plans to meet the needs of Ohio individuals with disabilities and their DSPs.

Thank you again for the privilege to share my thoughts with you. Please let me know if I can be of any help during this process.

Respectfully,



Diane Beastrom  
President & CEO  
Koinonia Homes, Inc.  
216-262-0813  
diane.beastrom@koinoniahomes.org