



Senate Finance Committee

Testimony on HB 166

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Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities

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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Marie Wilbanks and I am the Director of Service and Support Administration (SSA) for the Pickaway County Board of Developmental Disabilities. In this capacity, I oversee the authorization and monitoring of both Medicaid and county-funded services for approximately 360 children and adults. I am also the mother of two children, ages eight and nine. My eldest son has a developmental diagnosis of spina bifida, and my husband and I are therefore involved in providing advocacy and complex medical care on his behalf. Today, however, I am testifying on behalf of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, which represents all 88 county boards of DD and the approximately 94,000 Ohioans they serve.

Language inserted into the substitute bill this week would impose a list of new requirements governing how county boards of DD talk to people with developmental disabilities and their families about intermediate care facilities (ICFs).

As written, the current version of the bill would require county boards to repeatedly mention institutional settings to people and families regardless of the appropriateness of those settings for the people receiving or inquiring about services. At minimum, every time a person interacts with a county board of DD relative to any service, the board would be required to provide a physical copy of a pamphlet produced by the Department of Developmental Disabilities and assist the person with accessing a list of providers of ICF and Home and Community Based Services. These requirements would have to be met regardless of a person's eligibility for these services or their relevance to the service about which the person inquired. If the person expresses interest in ICF services, the board would then be required to provide contact information for all ICF providers in that county and all contiguous counties, again regardless of any actual vacancies or the person's eligibility for the service.

These mandates would be dismissive of many people and families who do not want to consider institutional service settings and confusing to new Ohio residents and new parents—many of whom would be falsely led to believe that ICFs should be considered for all people in all cases (including for infants, toddlers, and school age children).

This language also would require county boards to offer the ICF option to everyone despite the principles of Person Centered Thinking, planning, and self direction at a time when Ohio's DD support system is striving to help people create opportunities for meaningful community integration and acceptance.

These mandates would be duplicative with current county board practice. County boards of DD already communicate openly with people and families about all appropriate and available service options—as they have done for more than 50 years. In addition, these changes misguidedly seek to correct a shortcoming of the previous Ohio waiver waiting list which was already overhauled to better serve people with immediate needs.

Additionally, these provisions run counter to years' worth of advocacy by people with developmental disabilities who have clearly and repeatedly made their preferences (and legal rights) heard and understood. Institutional settings (while necessary for people requiring a high level of care) are not and should not be seen as a default

method of support for all people with developmental disabilities. These budget changes would promote the overly broad use of what is meant to be a specialized support model for people with intense needs. Institutionalization in ICFs should not be discussed in equal terms and at all times alongside home and community-based options.

OACB cannot accept this language and stands with other advocacy organizations—including The Arc of Ohio and the Ohio Self Determination Association—in calling on the Senate to remove this language from the state budget bill and reinstate the House-passed provisions.

Thank you for your time and attention today. I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.