

To Committee Chair Roemer and members of The House Finance Committee

My name is Susan Koller. I live in Cincinnati and am a member of the Ohio Home and Community Based Services Coalition (OHCBCS). Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony in support of OHCBCS's budget priorities. I have a very personal connection to OHCBCS's budgetary priority of leveraging state and federal funding to ensure access to quality providers and services while expanding housing and provider capacity in the community. In April 2018 my life got turned upside down when I moved out of my mom's house in Dayton and into a long-term care facility/nursing home in Cincinnati. My move was necessitated by a shortage of providers.

I have cerebral palsy and need help with all my activities of daily living. Up until my move, I had always lived in the community either with my family or at college. I was fortunate that for the majority of my life my parents were able to do all my care. However for about 10 years before my move. I had aides from numerous home healthcare agencies helping my mom with my personal care. This enabled my mom to work as a teacher and me to work both in the community and from home. This system was far from perfect. There was a lot of turnover and call offs amongst the aides, but my mom and I made it work. It was getting progressively harder to find aides, and as of January 2018 there was no one to help my mom.

I had never planned on living in a long-term care facility. In fact before I moved, I had my name down for an accessible apartment and was going to try living by myself. Obviously since there were no aides available, this was not possible. In fact if I moved out on my own I would need more help from aides because they would have to do all the household chores that my mom did along with all my care.

I chose to live in a facility for a number of reasons. First of all, my mom is older and can no longer care for me 24 hours a day 7 days a week. My family and I were also worried about what would happen to me if mom had a medical emergency. I would have no one to care for me. Lastly, I thought by moving to a facility I would avoid the stress of the provider shortage.

However as soon as I moved into the facility, I learned that facilities are dealing with the provider shortage as well. Aides who work in facilities also call off a lot. This sometimes leads to long waits for care and to a resident sometimes only receiving basic care.

Making matters worse is the fact that along with dealing with issues I had to deal with living in the community, I now have to deal with issues that are unique to living in a facility as well. I found facility life to restrictive before the pandemic. As anyone can imagine, the restrictions on me and other residents have only gotten worse since the pandemic. However by far the worst aspects about living in a facility for me are not having the individualized care I received at home and not having as much say in how I want my care performed. I really miss the freedom and self-determination I had in the community!

That is why I am starting the process of trying to live in the community again. However, I cannot realize this dream unless I find both high quality providers and accessible housing. Therefore, I cannot urge the members of this subcommittee strongly enough to incorporate OHCBCS's priorities into the next biennium budget. Thank you for reviewing my testimony, and I would welcome the chance to talk about this important issue in greater detail with committee members.

Sincerely,

Susan Koller

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