



INDEPENDENCE

OF PORTAGE COUNTY

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Testimony on HB 110 House Finance Committee

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and Esteemed Committee Members,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer this testimony on Ohio's operating budget!

My name is Jerome O'Neal and I am the Residential Supervisor of Independence of Portage County and we are located in Portage County. We are a not for profit business that provides supports for 100+ Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and we employ approximately 200 people.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine, Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). With these budget initiatives and the leadership of Director Davis and Director Miller, Ohioans with developmental and intellectual disabilities will continue to receive the vital services that organizations like mine provide.

I have been a Residential Supervisor for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities for 6 years and have been working in this field for 8 years. Throughout these many years, I have had the privilege to work with some amazing individuals. Sadly, I have also had the misfortune of witnessing what happens when an agency cannot provide services to the people who need them the most.

Whether due to lack of staffing or several behavioral or medical needs, it breaks everyone's hearts to be forced to discontinue services when we have the desire to continue but lack the funding and resources to do so. With additional funding and resources, we could help hundreds more people live an independent and quality life. I currently supervise a youth home and we have had to discontinue services for 3 kids in just 3 years because we do not have the funds and resources to provide the level of care these youth need. With more funding, we would be able to pay staff an appropriate wage for the work they do and afford the resources our underserved youth need to grow into functional adults.

To best support these services and the Ohioans who receive and provide them, I encourage you to support the addition of the following initiatives into Ohio's biennium budget:

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to fund much needed Homemaker and Personal Care, Day and Vocational Services and Nonmedical Transportation Medicaid home and community based waiver services rate increase.

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These increases will provide much needed funds for Direct Support Professional (DSP) wages, support for other front-line professionals and sustain the infrastructure necessary to provide our services.

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to support the reimbursement formula for intermediate care facilities (ICF).
- Support a budget amendment that would allow ICFs to choose between a reimbursement rate freeze or a continuation of the formula for the first year of the biennium.
- Support the creation of a Task Force to address our system's workforce challenges. *This Task Force will identify several initiatives and projects designed to help providers recruit and retain a qualified workforce.*
- Support the as introduced budget for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! **Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.**

Regards,

Jerome O'Neal

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WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 3/8/2021

Name: Jerome O'Neal

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Independence of Portage County

Position/Title: Residential Supervisor

Address: 575 E. Lake St.

City: Ravenna State: OH Zip: 44266

Best Contact Telephone: 330-839-5649 Email: RS12@iopci.org

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB110

Specific Issue: Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Budget

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 3 Minutes or less.

Please provide a brief statement on your position: I am in the homes that I supervise on a day to day basis, making sure everything is running well, documentation is being done and the individuals are prospering and healthy.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.