



4/15/2021

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Committee, Chairperson Oelslager

Chairperson Oelslager and Esteemed Members of the House Finance Committee,

My name is Peter Moore and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony, it is an honor to be here today. I am here to provide testimony on behalf of the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA), a statewide association that represents 180 private provider organizations serving over 32,000 people with developmental disabilities with a DSP workforce of over 24,000 strong.

I would like to start by expressing our deepest gratitude to you, Ohio's Lawmakers, for your support of the developmental disability field over the past several years and for allowing us the opportunity to testify again in front of this Committee. We are appreciative of all the difficult work that this Committee and House leadership has put into the recently released substitute bill of House Bill 110.

The theme for my testimony today remains Workforce, Workforce, Workforce. It is time for us to be intentional and strategic while addressing the workforce issues. At OPRA we have 4 Guiding principles that act as our compass for times like these. The first principle talks about the importance of the relationship between front-line professionals and the people we support. We are developing a workforce that values these relationships and a system that rewards a professionals for their efforts and with your partnership we believe we can build amazing and fulfilling relationships and help the people we support live full and productive lives.

Two years ago Ohio's state operating budget set the foundation for us to begin to seriously take on the workforce issue by increasing Homemaker Personal Care (rates) so we could raise the average wage for Direct Support Professionals. It also allowed us to continue to support the specialized services our Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) provide by continuing a rate formula that allows for growth. This was the first serious attempt to address the workforce issue in nearly two decades. In this budget we ask to continue this momentum in addressing our workforce challenges.

We are proud of the community that supports Ohioans with developmental disabilities. The COVID-19 health risks for some Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities are significantly higher than the rest of the population. With unwavering grit and determination and with the support of local and state-level partners, providers have been able to step up in unbelievable ways to keep the people they serve and employ healthy and safe. But make no mistake, the virus further highlighted the fact that at the end of the day, Ohioans with developmental disabilities need qualified and well compensated staff.

We can already see some of the ways COVID-19 has likely permanently altered the system's ability to maintain their workforces. As we look toward the future, there is no doubt that our biggest priority is how to build and maintain a quality workforce and improve our ability to compete with the other entities who are also facing their own workforce challenges. The needs of the people we support and

the demands of our system are evolving and Ohio's providers need your support to meet those needs and demands.

House Bill 110's sub-bill makes a small investment in day services for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, an investment for which we are grateful for! We still believe the initiatives we testified on previously remain necessary to bolster the sustainability of services for Ohioans with developmental disabilities. We encourage the committee to include the below initiatives in their next iteration of HB 110:

- **Homemaker and Personal Care (including on-site/on-call and transportation), Day and Vocational Services, Nonmedical Transportation Waiver Services, shared living, and respite services** We are requesting two 5% increases to the rates in these three service areas over the next Biennium. These increases will provide the funds needed for DSP wages, support other front-line professionals and sustain the infrastructure needed to support the front-line workforce. One increase on 1/1/22 and the second increase on 1/1/23.
- **Intermediate Care Facilities** After years of work, we were able to establish an ICF formula that has worked for providers. We would like to continue to implement that formula. We are asking for a 1.5% increase in the first year of the biennium and 3.5% increase in the second year. Given the challenges that the global pandemic presented when it came to budgeting in 2020, we are recommending a budget amendment that would allow us to establish two reimbursement paths that would minimize the negative impact of the virus on ICF rates.
- **Multi-System Youth** We are supportive of the investment proposed in the Governor's budget focused on serving young people who are faced with many unique challenges.
- **Workforce Challenges** We would like create a Task Force to address our system's workforce challenges. This Task Force will identify several initiatives and projects that are designed to help providers recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

Thank you for your time and attention today. We are looking forward to working with you on the budget and we want to be a resource for you as you navigate the needs of our system.

Respectfully Submitted,



Peter J. Moore
President and CEO
Ohio Provider Resource Association