



Testimony on HB 110

House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West, and esteemed committee members,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today.

Our non-profit organization, The Fuse Network, has existed since 1965. Last year we supported more than 450 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with a staff of 85. As the CEO, Mary Thompson-Hufford, of the Fuse Network I couldn't be more proud of how our team has continued to put people with intellectual and developmental disabilities first ensuring that essential services continue to be provided through the pandemic.

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.

Precovid the margins for services were small but with the pandemic the workforce issues have exceeded a crisis point. Our organization continues to turndown service delivery opportunities due to a lack of staff. Our team provides intermittent services going into individuals with disabilities homes for a short period of time to help them get ready for the day, cook dinner or engage with others in the community. We were the largest provider in each of our counties of service, paid new hires a starting wage higher than other providers and had tremendous success within our service delivery gaining state recognition for our innovation of service delivery.

The additional investment will support our efforts of recruitment and retention of essential front line workers. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities need support and with your help we can assist Ohioans in receiving the essential services needed within their home and community setting.

To best support these services and the Ohioans who receive and provide them, I encourage you to add 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. *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.*
- 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.



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