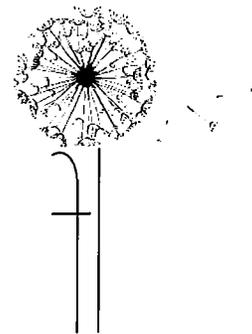


COMMUNITY, LIFE & INNOVATION



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Testimony on HB 110
Senate Finance Committee
May 13th, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Committee on HB 110.

My name is John Schwartz and I am the CEO of CLI Incorporated, located in the Firelands region of Ohio (Huron, Erie, and Ottawa counties primarily). We are a 501(C)3 not-for-profit business that provides supports for 65 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and we employ 16 staff. CLI is unique in that our services are almost exclusively directed at achieving measurable outcomes around community employment earnings and integration in to the local communities. We invest our money, time, and energy into projects that best serve people with disabilities and the larger community. I write today to encourage the Committee to increasing funding for services administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Frankly, CLI has always struggled to find sufficient numbers of qualified employees. Everyone knows that jobs which take care of people, whether kids, special populations, or the elderly, do not pay enough to support a family. Pre-COVID, CLI would get 40+ applicants for open positions, but out of that list, fewer than 20 would follow through with requests for references and interview availability. Have of the remaining 20 would not show up for the actual interview. Out of the 10 interviewed, it would be typical to have 2 that were excited to join CLI's team, but then turn down the offer once they compared what we are able to offer to what other fields were able to offer. Because of the community-forward, independent nature of CLI positions, and the potential vulnerability of CLI clients, we have to hire carefully, which means that our typical employee is punching way below their weight and could make more money almost anywhere. Post-COVID, the prospects are worse. CLI posted 2 jobs for a month, one part-time requiring no degree, paying \$18/hour, and the other full-time requiring a degree with annual salary of \$35,000 to \$39,000. A month later we have gotten 0 applicants for the full-time position and 2 applicants for the part-time position (1 of which has not responded to our request more than a week ago to schedule an interview).

CLI's revenue is down more than 40% from 2019. As we try to claw our way back to a sustainable business model (without PPP loans, CLI would not have survived 2020), CLI can only offer services to about ½ of the people we used to serve. This is tough because we have long-term relationships with clients and families. It is difficult to tell people you care for that you can no longer help them. We are a charitable organization that strives to put mission at least equal to net income. However, the reality is that we now have to consider immediate payback for everything we agree to provide. It really is an O2 mask on the plane scenario for us. In 2021 CLI will serve less than 50% of the number of clients we served in 2019.

The House's version of HB 110 makes a small investment in day services for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While any investment in these services is welcomed, I believe there is still more the General Assembly can do to ensure the sustainability and accessibility of services for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This might mean either a complete redesign of how federal, state, and county tax dollars are allocated to actual services vs. oversight and/or it might simply mean the DD system somehow getting more money overall.

CLI has great staff who earned less money coming to work for the past 14 months than if they'd stayed home. They continued to work in people's homes, leading isolated crews of volunteers with disabilities running food pantries, and otherwise providing direct services to adults with disabilities so that their families could go to their essential job too. If we collectively don't build a better system of supports for CLI clients, the elderly, and school-age children—real progress won't happen because too many of us are parents, siblings, or aging for this to end well otherwise.

I encourage you to add the following initiatives into Ohio's biennium budget to best support my staff, my services, and the Ohioans we support:

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities budget to fund much needed rate increases for homemaker and personal care, day, vocational and employment services, nonmedical transportation, respite services, and shared living under the three Home and Community Based Services waivers administered by DODD.
- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to support the reimbursement formula for intermediate care facilities (ICF).
- Allow a temporary change in statute to alter the ICF reimbursement rate calculations for the first year of the biennium.
- Support the creation of a task force to address our system's workforce challenges, including calculating what percentage of federal, state & county tax dollars allocated to serving people with disabilities is spent on direct care employees.

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.

Sincerely,



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