

**The Arc of Ohio Testimony**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**Finance Hearing Room – May 13, 2021**

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Minority Member Sykes, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Gary Tonks. I am the President/CEO of The Arc of Ohio.

The Arc of Ohio is the oldest and largest grassroots advocacy organization, representing Ohioans with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families. As the founder of our developmental disabilities network of supports and the first schools for children with disabilities, I want to offer our thoughts on HB 110.

The current budget proposal was developed at a time when Ohio's fiscal outlook was uncertain; and, we therefore are thankful that human service funding was not slashed. It is important, however, to note that the outlook for the coming years is much better now that we are on the other side of the pandemic.

Our Department of Developmental Disabilities and County Boards serve approximately 100,000 children and adults and there are over 270,000 children identified by the Department of Education as having a disability. One in ten Ohio families is affected by someone with a developmental disability.

It is with this in mind, that we urge you to consider the hard working direct support staff who provide needed, sometimes life sustaining support to Ohio's most vulnerable citizens. While staffing shortages exist in virtually every aspect of Ohio's economy, our direct support staff are among the lowest paid, with few if any benefits. Many qualify for Ohio Medicaid benefits and often have fewer dollars at the end of the month than the very people they support.

Our Waivers, which currently receive approximately 70% in federal funding, are most often matched with local levy dollars. As you know, not every county is able to provide the match necessary to support its children and adults with disabilities and we therefore need your assistance with general fund revenue to increase provider rates by 5% each year of the biennium and support those children and adults still waiting for support.

We need your support to unfreeze the statutory increase necessary for Intermediate Care Facilities to support children and adults in their care.

You have been faithful in your support for our loved ones over the years and we urge you to continue that support with fiscal amendments filed since the introduction of HB 110.

As the founder of the DD System, The Arc was also instrumental in the creation of the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities, which established among other things, State

Councils on Developmental Disabilities, University Centers in Excellence and State Protection and Advocacy Systems.

An amendment to HB 110 calls for the creation of a joint committee of the General Assembly to ultimately review who should serve as Ohio's Protection and Advocacy entity. The Arc of Ohio and our thousands of families adamantly oppose this amendment as unnecessary. We, again, were instrumental in the creation of what was Ohio Legal Rights and supported its evolution into a now distinct separate not-for-profit now known as Disability Rights Ohio to maintain and enhance its unconflicted advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities.

Disability Rights Ohio receives no state dollars and has been exemplary in its representation of our loved ones. Please maintain their independence and remove this amendment from consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available for any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Tonks", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary Tonks, President/CEO

The Arc of Ohio

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