



THE SOCIETY FOR HANDICAPPED CITIZENS
4283 Paradise Road + Seville, OH 44273 + 877.546.8588 or 330.722.1900
Fax: 330.723.6695 + www.shc-medina.org

**Testimony on HB 110
Senate Health Committee
May 6, 2021**

Executive Director
Melanie A. Kasten-Krause

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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and esteemed Members of the Senate Health Committee,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Committee today on HB 110.

My name is Melanie Kasten-Krause and I am the Executive Director of The Society, which is based in Medina County and offers services in Medina, Huron, Ashland and Crawford counties. We are a not-for-profit that provides supports for more than 150 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and we employ 157 staff. The Society has been providing services since 1953. Today our services include residential supports both through ICF and waiver programs, adult day, payee and non-medical transportation. I write today to encourage the Committee to increase funding for services administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

I have worked in the field of developmental disabilities for 39 years and have never experienced a staffing shortage and retention crisis as severe as today. As stated above we have 157 employees but we also have 60 open positions or 2403 open hours per pay period. Those open hours cannot go uncovered. The people we support need assistance with meal preparation, bathing, toileting, medication, access to medical care and other activities of daily living. Our core dedicated staff are working significant overtime which is not calculated in our rates. Recruitment is continuous but success is limited. A recent article in the Medina Gazette stated there were over 500 open positions among Medina County employers. The wages that we can pay are not competitive.

We have begun to turn down services. We are looking at how we can scale back the services we offer. We have always been the agency that the Count Board could call for help in an emergency or would serve an individual with significant needs but due to current staff shortages we cannot commit to services unless we know we have the staff to meet individual needs.

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. Additional funding will allow us to increase employee wages and invest further in employee benefits and ultimately help to assure that we meet the needs of the individuals we support.

My staff have done amazing and heroic things since the pandemic began, but they are tired, emotionally exhausted and need help. 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.

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.**

Melanie A. Kasten-Krause

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mkast@shc-medina.org

4283 Paradise Road, Seville, OH 44273

330-242-2477