



March 24, 2023

**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget  
House Finance Committee**

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeny, and esteemed committee members,

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

My name is James Steffey and I am the CEO of Envision, and we are located in Cincinnati Ohio and provide services in Hamilton, Clermont, Warren and Butler counties. We are an organization that provides Homemaker/Personal Care, Non-medical Transportation, Adult Day Services, and Shared Living administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 170 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 600 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD.** The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which the people we serve and their families rely. The budget proposed in HB 33 is a good foundation to help our system combat these many changes.

Turnover last year at Envision was over 30%. We currently have 22 open direct support professional positions. It seems like every week we lose another good, caring DSP from the field as they take jobs for higher pay in other industries (retail, fast food, warehouse, etc....). Because Envision's reimbursement is tied to Medicaid waiver rates, we have not been able to increase what we charge for services to meet the demand for higher wages like many businesses. We are also having a difficult time filling open positions as our starting wage, while average for our industry, is often well below the starting wage of jobs available in the marketplace. New people are not entering the field at a rate fast enough to keep pace with those who are leaving.

Because of the labor shortage, Envision is having to turn away new referrals for services – services that are critical to meeting the health and safety needs of the person with a disability. Without service providers the burden of care falls to family members. As a mother of a child we serve said to me this week, "My greatest fear in life is that I will outlive my child". No parent should have to hope to outlive their child because they fear that



adequate care isn't available. It's time we take steps to ensure that people with disabilities have access to appropriate care and services.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Envision. I **encourage this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars through budget amendment HC0656 into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64.**

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 today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Steffey".

James Steffey, CEO

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