



# koinonia

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

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

I'm Christine Chenevey, Grants Manager for Koinonia. We provide services for over 350 individuals with intellectual disabilities in northeast Ohio. We offer day hab and workforce readiness programs, intermediate care facilities and residential services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Koinonia is the Greek word for Fellowship, which is appropriate as we are coming together with many organizations from throughout Ohio to ask for your support individuals with IDD, AND our fellow employees, the Direct Support Professionals who are front-line service providers for our clients.

The historic budget presented by Governor DeWine and DODD Director Hauck is commendable and appreciated. The Governor said, "It reflects our obligation to make sure every Ohioan has the tools to succeed, to get a good job, to live their dreams..."

But we're concerned this budget doesn't go far enough to ensure that our STAFF can live their dreams. Their salaries -- capped by Medicaid -- don't meet basic needs. The proposed salary increase is not enough to keep up with the rising cost of living. It isn't enough to attract, or keep, the staff we need. We are currently over 100 staff short of where we should be, to provide the care our individuals deserve. When interviewing applicants for this position, qualified, interested candidates can't take care of their families on a \$ 14-an-hour salary.

We are asking this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD, and invest additional dollars through budget amendment HC0656 into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to an average of at least \$20 an hour. That amounts to an annual salary of less than \$43,000 a year.

My job as Grants Manager is to generate corporate and foundation funding for services not covered by Medicaid. But nothing I do can address our greatest need – dedicated, responsible staff. We are relying on you and your colleagues to not only approve the increase proposed in Governor DeWine's budget, but to substantially increase the state's investment in service reimbursement.

I often tell grantors, "Our people ARE our programs". This is your opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people who bring life to our programs, as well as the underserved population they care for every day.

Thank you for your consideration. We're grateful for the prospect of your support.

Christine Chenevey

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