



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

My name is John Pas and I am the Manager of Business Intelligence for Koinonia Homes, and we are located in Independence, Ohio, serving multiple northeast Ohio counties. Intentionally selecting a community-based model for service, Koinonia has grown to 22 licensed, Medicaid funded group homes and over 50 homes funded through Home and Community Based Service (HCBS) waivers. Our organization also provides shared living, respite, behavioral health, transportation, day, vocational, and employment services. Our dedicated staff are proud to provide these essential services to those Ohioans in our care with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic our passionate and empathetic direct service providers have provided essential care, companionship, and daily support to our individuals. The families of the individuals we serve depend on our services. However, Medicaid is by far the largest source of funds for Koinonia, and the reimbursement rate we receive is not sustainable. While our industry faced funding challenges prior to COVID-19, the pandemic exacerbated them. We have endured extended staffing shortages, directly impacting the services we provide our individuals, and forcing us to consolidate housing. Koinonia has been around for 47 years and remains an anchor institution in Northeast Ohio. This changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which our the people we serve and their families rely. We need the resources to do better and perform the highest level of service possible. The budget proposed in HB 33 is a good foundation to help our system combat these many changes.

I personally know the difference in care that Koinonia can provide those with long-term health needs. My Uncle John passed away some years ago from complications due to multiple sclerosis, in a nursing home. Uncle John was the first person in his family to complete college, going on to receive a law degree. He received his diagnosis while studying for the bar exam. My talented and proud Uncle John had to move back in with my grandparents to receive their care, eventually losing the ability to walk. With his disease progressing and the challenges of his care proving too great, my grandparents had to admit him to a nursing home institution; there were no options like Koinonia for my uncle's care to proceed at home. I grew up visiting Uncle John in poor quality institutions, witnessing firsthand the challenges the overworked staff had to overcome and the resulting suboptimal care they provided, and the daily indignities the nursing home residents had to endure. My uncle, who had a condition like those IDD individuals we care for, deserved better care than he received.

Like my uncle, our individuals need and deserve better. Koinonia provides integral support to the individuals we serve, supporting them in living healthier, longer lives in the communities they call home. The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck and Miller, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by your agency. With these budget initiatives, Ohioans with disabilities will continue to receive the vital employment services organizations like Koinonia provide. We encourage this committee to approve the Governor's

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# koinonia

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 an hour.

These services are essential to IDD Ohioans, and with your leadership, together we can ensure these services remain available to those who need them. Thank you 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.

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