

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: March 29, 2023

Name: Beth Butler

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization

Organization (If Applicable): VentureLINX

Position/Title: CEO

Address: 909 E Wayne St Suite 110

City: Celina State: Ohio Zip: 45822

Best Contact Telephone: 419-586-2137 ext 218 Email: bbutler@venturelinx.org

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes  No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 33

Specific Issue: Department of Developmental Disabilities and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Budget

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? Written testimony only

Please provide a brief statement on your position: I support the budget initiatives outlined by DODD and OOD and encourage the sub-committee to include additional investments for these important services.

*Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.*



## **Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget**

### **House Finance Committee**

My name is Beth Butler, and I am the CEO of ventureLINX. We are located in Celina and Greenville, Ohio serving Mercer, Darke and Auglaize counties. We are an organization that provides employment and day services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) as well as employment and vocational training through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. We also just became a Ticket to Work provider. Our team of twenty-nine employees are proud to provide essential services to 140 Ohioans.

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). The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide critical support 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.

ventureLINX provides services to over 140 men and women with disabilities. These individuals rely on more than 30 DSPs to provide assistance on the path to employment whether it be gaining skills to finding a job, employment supports, or being there as a support in life. DSPs are the backbone of long-term support for people with disabilities. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was already a documented DSP workforce crisis, with high turnover and vacancy rates. These issues have only gotten worse. We have had to discontinue critical Homemaker/Personal Care services to more than 100 people with disabilities due to lack of staff and are about to face the same issue again with our day services. People cannot afford to work here even though we average in the high end of hourly wages across the state. We must use funds from other sources to pay these rates because we are in the second lowest Medicaid funding range and those funds are running out.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck and Director Miller, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by ventureLINX. With these budget initiatives, Ohioans with disabilities will continue to receive the vital employment and day services organizations like us provide. We encourage this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and ODD 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 "Beth Butler". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Beth Butler

[bbutler@venturelinx.org](mailto:bbutler@venturelinx.org)

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