



ECHOING HILLS

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members,

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

My name is Melissa Villani and I am the Director of Residential Services of Echoing Hills in SW Ohio, and we are located in Dayton, OH. We are an organization that provides recreational services, intermediate care facilities serving people with developmental disabilities, community based waiver services, and adult day services, administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of over 150 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 80 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and that is just in this region, Echoing Hills employs and serves many more people state wide.

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. I am truly thankful for the work Governor DeWine has already done as it relates to the budget for necessary services for people with Developmental Disabilities in Ohio.

As rewarding as it is to work with individuals with developmental disabilities it comes with a lot more responsibility and liability than working at a fast food restaurant or retail store. Our direct support workers quite literally have people's lives in their hands. Often the choice to do this line of work for less is quickly turned down when they can make more money with less responsibility. When we have a staff shortage the individuals can only live a safe life where they are fed, kept clean, and healthy.

It is vital that we are able to provide a meaningful life to those with developmental disabilities, where they can not only go out into the community but be a part of it. Where people don't have to feel like a burden for needing help with basic human needs such as showers, going to the bathroom and eating meals due to short staffing. Where they can be safe and healthy but also have a fulfilled life with friends and family and be a real member of the community with not only social and leisure opportunities, but also things like community employment and volunteering. Without higher wages we will only be able to offer basic services and that is not what a person needs to live a meaningful life and its time we are able to offer better!



ECHOING HILLS

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 Echoing Hills. We encourage this subcommittee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

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.

Melissa Villani
Mvillani@ehvi.org
370 W 1st St. Dayton, OH 45402
937-396-9982