

**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
Submitted 20 March 2023**

House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed Committee Members:

I request your support for the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck that support the community supported by DODD. The labor shortage situation, resulting from very low market rate wages, is critical and has a detrimental effect on persons and families.

As a certified independent provider for my daughter, I know first hand how challenging it is to meet her needs. And I also know that if I was not providing her care, it would be nearly impossible to find and keep a quality Direct Support Professional. We live in an area that has abundant job opportunities that pay more for low skilled labor than the Medicaid Home and Community Based Service rate for trained and certified care staff.

Further, care facilities are competing for the same pool of quality people and there are many more openings than people willing to work in this challenging field.

My daughter has tried to find employment, but it is difficult for her since she is unable to read and write and has physical and intellectual limitations. Her day services involve both habilitation at Unity Care Group and supported volunteer work with Goodwill. Both Unity and Goodwill have difficulty attracting staff and there is constant turnover, with people leaving because of low pay and plentiful other opportunities. Those that remain are stressed and overworked so that I fear for their health and safety.

The Governor's budget initiatives, coupled with Director Hauk's leadership, form a great foundation to reinforce and build services that are desperately needed.

Please approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD services and raise the direct support professional wage to at least an average of \$20.64 per hour. This will go a long way to recruit and retain a workforce that is so valuable and critical.

With your leadership, services will be available to the Ohioans that rely on you for basic human services.

Thank you for the opportunity and privilege to address you with my concerns. If you find that I can be of service in your process, please reach out to me.

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*Respectfully,
Janet L. Peasant*