

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding House Bill 33. I am Ms. Wheelchair Ohio 2023, Allison Boot. I am here to speak to you about the importance of home and community-based services.

As a woman with a significant disability, home and community-based services are vital to my life. Without access to home and community-based services and the caregivers who support those services, I would not be able to complete basic activities of daily living like bathing, dressing, toileting, and transferring to my wheelchair to participate in your community much less advocate for myself and others with disabilities. Finding and keeping caregivers has always been a challenge but doing so became nearly impossible when the pandemic accelerated an already existing direct care crisis. My husband and I struggle so much to find home and community-based service waiver providers that we often resort to paying people out of pocket to have our needs met. To stay competitive wage-wise, we have had to pay people more than we can comfortably afford and have been impacted financially. Unfortunately, we are not alone by any means. Many of our friends and their families are also feeling the financial impact of the direct care crisis. My husband and I have both been trying to get second jobs but are worried that if we do, we'll lose them due to our lack of direct care support. Worse yet, the direct care crisis has forced many people with disabilities to rely on their aging parents or other family to care for them. This puts both people with disabilities and their members at risk of harm and sometimes results in people with disabilities not getting the care that we need and deserve. Should the direct care crisis continue, many people who rely on these services will be forced to make the decision to go into a Skilled Nursing Facility. According to the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging, in home services can cost as low as \$1,225 a month whereas the average Skilled Nursing Facility costs \$6,361 a month proving that in home services are actually cheaper for the state.

In 2009, the U.S. signed on to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability to ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for people with like me. According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with a Disability, as of today, the U.S. is 1 of 185 countries to have signed on. Supporting home and community-based services is a way to make sure that Ohioans with disabilities are free to enjoy all our state has to offer.

Part of my Ms. Wheelchair Ohio platform is to encourage youth with disabilities to dream big and live their lives to the fullest. Being able to advocate by giving you this testimony is a big dream for me which would not be possible if not for the home and community-based services I received. In closing, I urge you to please support funding for home and community-based services so that other people with disabilities can also dream big and live life to the fullest. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

Allison Boct

Ms. Wheelchair Ohio 2023/ Author of the *Tales of Dance Series, The Magic Within*
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Pronouns : she/her/hers

"People with disabilities can do whatever able-bodied people can do. They just have to do it a little differently," Derrick Denison, Royal Prince of Mooncrest.