



Health and Human Services Subcommittee  
House Bill 33 Proponent Testimony  
March 23, 2023

Robert Heinzerling  
Executive Director  
Heinzerling Community

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee. My name is Bob Heinzerling, and I am the Executive Director of Heinzerling Community, an Intermediate Care Facility or ICF. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding House Bill 33. We have proudly served Central Ohio's most medically fragile and disabled citizens since 1959. Our campus and homes are located on the west side of Columbus, and we are the only developmental disability organization in Franklin County that provides around the clock residential services exclusively for this population. Today, approximately 350 dedicated staff members work together to provide a loving home environment and intensive care to 159 children and adults with severe or profound developmental disabilities.

The work our staff performs on a normal day is extremely challenging, which only became more difficult during the pandemic. Like many ICFs, Heinzerling Community faced challenges filling open positions before the pandemic, and these staffing difficulties were exacerbated by the onset of COVID-19 and have not improved. **We are currently at our most critical staffing point in the organizations over sixty (60) year history.** Hiring staff at all levels of our organization remains a significant challenge.

As a result of our extraordinary staffing issues, we have not been able to admit new residents since before the pandemic (barring a couple of emergency situations) because we simply do not have the human capacity to take care of any more residents. **In fact, we have over forty (40) individuals on our waitlist, which is by far the longest waitlist we've ever experienced in Heinzerling's history. Unfortunately, our considerable waitlist is despite having available beds, as we are only at 78% bed capacity. We just do not have the workforce to care for additional DD residents in need.**

We have made every effort to address our staffing needs through common sense, market-based approaches. Our efforts include:

- adding an additional recruiter to our staff;
- advertising in non-traditional avenues such as billboards, radio, and direct mail;
- adding an electronic module to our HRIS system to allow us to reach more potential applicants by providing an online and text-to-apply application system;

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- incentive pay to encourage current staff to pick-up extra shifts;
- adopting a Hero Pay program which provides a bonus to all staff each pay period based on the number of hours worked; and,
- providing food and ice cream trucks, as well as other surprises, to show our appreciation to our existing staff.

Regardless of our extensive efforts, the number of employment applications we are receiving is dwindling, and the turnover in our existing staff is the highest it has ever been. We are unable to compete with employers who are able to pay a higher wage. And unlike other employers trying to attract workers, we cannot increase our “cost of services” because 100% of our residents are on Medicaid. Often times we find employees who are excellent caregivers and genuinely want to work with the residents at Heinzerling but can’t afford to turn down a higher paying job someplace else. With the rising costs of food and living expenses, employees who want to do this incredibly challenging and rewarding work simply cannot afford to take the job.

Moreover, we are directly competing for workforce with the state of Ohio-owned developmental centers, one of which is located only a couple of miles from Heinzerling. We often lose out on qualified workers because the state-owned center pays \$20 per hour, while our starting hourly rate is \$16.50.

We are extremely grateful for the Legislature’s previous support for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and Ohio’s provider community. The funding and support over the last two state budget cycles and throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic helped us to provide increased pay and bonuses to retain staff in order to keep operational. But as I stated, we are still experiencing a harrowing workforce crisis. I urge your support of the increased funding for the direct service providers caring for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration, please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Heinzerling  
Executive Director  
Heinzerling Community