

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 Andrew Schultz and I am the Admissions Coordinator of Koinonia, and we are located in Cuyahoga County. We are an organization that provides Intermediate Care Facilities, Wavier Housing, Shared Living Arrangements, Adult Day Programs, Vocational Habilitation and Career Services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of over 450 employees are proud to provide essential services to 350 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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.

Yet we are struggling to provide adequate staffing for our facilities, due to the low wages. This impacts the staffing ratio at our facilities and creates a burden on the staff who are working to do more with limited time and resources.

What this means is that we are unable to bring additional members from the community into our facilities for placement when they need to receive care. It also means the individuals in the facilities have limited opportunities to participate in the community due to staffing ratios. This also means not having the staff needed to be fully present for the clients we serve. If I cannot bring additional members of the community into our facilities, the families of these individuals are impacted, and the quality of life of the individuals could be impacted as well.

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 Koinonia. 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. 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.

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