



koinonia

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

Thank you, Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members for the opportunity to testify today.

I'm Christine Chenevey, Grants Manager for Koinonia, where we provide services for over 350 individuals with intellectual disabilities. We provide day hab and workforce readiness programs, intermediate care facilities and residential services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Koinonia is the Greek word for Fellowship, which is appropriate today as many organizations from throughout Ohio are here to support individuals with IDD, AND our fellow employees, the Direct Support Professionals, who are the front-line service providers for our clients.

The historic budget presented by Governor DeWine and DODD Director Hauck is commendable and appreciated. The Governor said, "It reflects our obligation to make sure every Ohioan has the tools to succeed, to get a good job, to live their dreams..."

But we're concerned this budget doesn't go far enough to ensure that our STAFF can live their dreams. Their salaries -- capped by Medicaid -- don't meet basic needs. The proposed salary increase is not enough to keep up with the rising cost of living. It isn't enough to attract, or keep, the staff we need. We are currently over 100 staff short of where we should be, to provide the care our individuals deserve.

We are asking that you consider raising the starting salary of Direct Support Professionals to \$20 an hour. That amounts to an annual salary of less than \$43,000 a year.

My job as Grants Manager is to generate corporate and foundation funding for services not covered by Medicaid. But nothing I do can address our greatest need -- dedicated, responsible staff. We are relying on you and your colleagues to not only approve the increase proposed in Governor DeWine's budget, but to substantially increase the state's investment in service reimbursement.

I often tell grantors, "Our people ARE our programs". This is your opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people who bring life to our programs, as well as the underserved population they care for every day.

Thank you for your consideration. We're grateful for the prospect of your support.