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Testimony on HB 33

Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and esteemed committee members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Sara Eppard and I am the State Director of Dungarvin Ohio, LLC and we are located throughout Ohio, providing services in 11 different counties. Dungarvin provides residential and day and services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 187 employees are proud to provide essential services to 158 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 support and their families rely. The House-passed version of HB 33 is an excellent foundation to help our system combat these many changes.

It has become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain staff based on the low reimbursement rates we receive, as we are 100% reliant on Medicaid funding. In the past three years, our employee retention rate has decreased by 30%, and our annual turnover is around 75%. Our ability to effectively hire and retain our employee base is crucial to our operation. Each month, Dungarvin turns down about 100 new referrals. We have shut down services in two counties, serving 10 people over the past year. At current reimbursement rates, our ability to continue operating is in jeopardy.

The vulnerable population we serve relies on consistent, caring staff to provide the essential supportive services they need to survive. Our staff dress those who cannot do it themselves, feed those who have arms that will not work, transport those who use wheelchairs in specialized vehicles and help mentor those who have behavioral struggles. The families of those served count on us to be there, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to care for their loved ones.

The budget initiatives for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, will reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Dungarvin. We encourage this committee to further invest additional funds on top of the House-passed budget for DODD.

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 today.

*Sara Eppard*

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