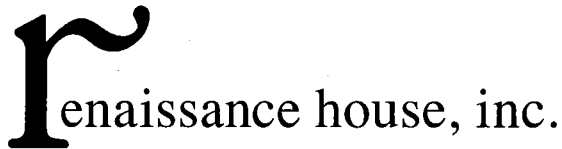


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Executive Director
Robert G. Weinhardt

**Testimony on HB 33
Senate Finance Committee**

Trustees

Eilene E. Guy
Mary Jane Hahler
Cable A. Steinemann
Susan L. Smith

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 Robert Weinhardt, and I am the Executive Director of Renaissance House, Inc. We are located in Erie, Huron, Seneca, Sandusky and Hancock Counties. We are an organization that provides residential services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 100 employees are proud to provide essential services to 70 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. The House-passed version of HB 33 is an excellent foundation to help our system combat these many changes.

Today we find ourselves in a major staffing crisis. It has become extremely difficult or impossible to recruit and retain essential direct support staff (DSP's). Our current rate of pay for Direct Care Professionals (DSPS), as a result of low reimbursement rates, is not competitive in today's workforce environment. Our workforce of dedicated DSPs are working 60-100 hours per week and managers are covering shifts to compensate for staffing shortages for the people we serve and we have had to turn away others seeking service.

The individuals we serve, and their families depend on us to maintain a sufficient work force. Our DSP's provide essential services to help with many aspects of daily living including providing intimate personal care, medication administration and other care to insure their health and safety.

The budget initiatives for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, will reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Renaissance House, Inc. 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Robert Weinhardt'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert Weinhardt, Executive Director
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Endeavoring to create and safeguard valued social roles for people