

Senate Finance Committee
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JaNan Maclin, Program Director, Heinzerling Community
House Bill 33 Proponent Testimony

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony today.

My name is JaNan Maclin and I work at Heinzerling Community, an Intermediate Care Facility or ICF, that is regulated by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. I am here to today to testify in support of the increased funding for direct service providers caring for individuals with development disabilities.

I began working with individuals who developmental disabilities about 16 years ago and have filled many positions in this time. For the last 13 years, I have worked with individual who have either a severe or profound disability. This means these individuals require total support in all aspects of their lives. Each day we focus giving baths to our residents, changing their soiled briefs, feeding them their meals, brushing their teeth and positioning them throughout the day. Our residents enjoy attending Day Programming during the week and spending their evenings and weekends relaxing and spending time with their families.

For 13 years I have dedicated my career to caring for people with disabilities that are not able to care for themselves. Each day I arrive to work, I am greeted by smiling and laughing residents that depend on me and their staff to improve the quality of their lives. Being able to provide care to these individuals helps boost their confidence, makes them feel cared for and respected. Seeing my residents visibly happier because they can count on me being there to help them is very rewarding.

The quality of the care our residents receive is strongly dependent on staffing level. In all of my years in this field of work, I have never experienced such a dire need for additional staff. As you can imagine, low staffing has a direct impact on how well we are able to meet the physical and emotional needs of my residents. Not having adequate staff directly impacts our ability of bathe residents, the frequency in which we can change their soiled attend, or even the length of time a person has to wait to eat their meals. Low staffing impacts our ability to respond to emergency situations and our ability to swiftly move our residents out of harm's way. In the event of an emergency, low staffing can be extremely hazardous to the safety of our residents. Because of this staffing shortage, there is less opportunity to engage our residents in social activities, community involvement, and opportunities for our residents to participate in activities they enjoy. Something as small as going outside for fresh air, taking a walk or spending time with loved ones, is directly impacted by low staffing and we are far less able to fulfill these needs.

Very often, I lose great staff due to their wages. On several occasions, staff have reported to me they were leaving because 'they don't get paid enough to do all the things required in the DSP role.' The tasks that I previously mentioned just scratch the surface of a DSPs scope of duties.

Increasing the wages of the DSP would not only attract more people to this role, but it would also result in improved resident care. Currently, our staff turnover is very high! Long term staff are leaving because the additional responsibilities are too demanding and they are experiencing a high level of burnout. New staff are overwhelmed when they start the job and they do not have the support of other staff members to train them properly. We are in a vicious cycle of low retention and high turnover that can be reduced if the wage is increased to match the requirements of the DSP role.

Increasing staff levels impacts several aspects of our job. Most importantly it improves the quality of care our residents receive. We serve individuals who are completely dependent on their staff to provide all of their daily needs, including bathing, feeding and changing their adult brief, as I mentioned before. Most of our residents require 2 staff persons to assist with transfers from one position to the next, for baths and to implement behavior support strategies. Having adequate staff to attend to the complex needs of our residents' care is crucial to providing overall quality care! Increasing staff helps decrease accidents and injuries to our residents and staff. My staff can no longer depend on a typical day of balanced staff to resident ratios. Every day staff have increasing numbers of residents to care for and they are spread very thin! When a staff person is required to split their attention to several tasks, errors are made, shortcuts are taken, things are forgotten. The potential for MUIs and medication errors increase.

Furthermore, adding additional staff ultimately helps reduce staff burnout. When staffing is low, the daily responsibilities of staff are constantly changing. That results in heavier, more challenging workloads on the staff. This additional pressure to increase staff daily duties produces anxiety in the staff and overwhelm which leads to shortcuts and errors. Ultimately, this impacts the quality of care our residents receive.

I urge you to thoughtfully consider raising the wages of DSP staff. The work these individuals do is extremely important and has a direct impact on the livelihood and wellbeing of people with developmental disabilities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and thank you for your consideration of additional funding for DD services. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.