

Testimony on HB 33
Senate Finance Committee

Thank you, Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and esteemed committee members for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.

My name is Christine Chenevey, Grants Manager for Koinonia. We provide services for over 350 individuals with intellectual disabilities in northeast Ohio. We offer 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.

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. When interviewing applicants for this position, qualified, interested candidates can't take care of their families on a \$ 14-an-hour salary.

We are asking this committee to support your colleagues in the House and their version of H.B. 33 as it pertains to DODD appropriations. We also encourage the Senate to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to an average of at least \$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.

Christine Chenevey

Christine@Chenevey.net

7843 Oakhurst Circle, Brecksville OH 44141

216 217-3817