

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 Gena Hart. I am a training and development specialist who works with our frontline staff to develop the skills, knowledge, and support needed to work with each individual's strengths and challenges. Koinonia is an organization in Northeast Ohio dedicated to improving social, physical, and social exclusion among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Through Koinonia, we help people achieve true independence, wellness, jobs of meaning, pride, and appreciation. Our Mission is to partner with people who have developmental disabilities and other complex conditions, resulting in the highest possible quality of life through integrated, whole-person care.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD).

As a trainer and development professional as well as someone who regularly cares for people with disabilities, I am aware of how this crisis impacts efforts to retain and recruit support professionals. As a result of current reimbursement rates, Direct Support Professionals suffer greatly from low wages. With over 17 years of experience in the field of intellectual disabilities, I have seen how low wages directly affect my former and current colleagues who provide direct care services. Many of my colleagues have had to find other sources of income or sacrifice their own needs in order to continue to provide quality care for those they serve. This is why it is so important that we advocate for an increase in reimbursement rates for Direct Support Professionals. This would ensure that those providing essential care are adequately compensated for their work.

The budget initiatives for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck and Miller, will reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Koinonia Homes Inc. We encourage this committee to further invest additional funds on top of the House-passed budget for DODD and maintain funding for OOD at the House-passed levels. 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.



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