

Stephen Morefield - Dayton Ohio, Interested Party for HB 33
June 6, 2023

Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only interested party testimony on House Bill 33 (HB 33) for the state's biennial budget. My name is Stephen Morefield and I am a 26 year old man living in the Dayton area. I have autism and a developmental disability, and I live on my own in an apartment. I enjoy being able to socialize with others in my community. I receive waivers through Medicare and Medicaid.

I receive around 10 hours of support a week for things like driving to doctor's appointments, filling out forms and medical paperwork, reading, cleaning my home, cooking, reminding me of certain hygiene and life tasks I need to do, and connecting in my community. I have good days where I can be more independent, but on my bad days sometimes I don't even want to get up. Outside of my service hours, I only receive remote monitoring. This has been a challenge for me.

I wanted to shine a light on the care crisis, and also how disabled Ohioans are treated in general. I feel like I have just been thrown into an apartment with minimal support. I feel certain things the county does to people who are disabled are just not fair. I'm not saying this just for myself personally, but everyone who is disabled in our state.

When I have all of the care I need in my home, it helps me a lot. Without access to my community and the ability to get out and see the sunlight, I feel like I go stir crazy just being in my house all of the time. I also get lonely, and I feel like having more support would help me to better learn how to socialize and would build up my self esteem.

Keeping providers in my home is a challenge. I have not had consistent support for this whole year, and even when I do have support I feel like the workers are so undertrained and underpaid that they do not want to stay. So I end up having subs, nonpermanent people, and now I don't have anybody. Before I had my last lady who quit due to misunderstandings, I had an independent provider. That didn't work out because he had a lot of clients and was overwhelmed. It's better to have somebody that just works with me instead of working with a lot of other clients.

In terms of training, they may not have been told how to communicate with someone who is autistic like me, and that leads to misunderstandings. Then, I don't get what I really need. I feel isolated, especially when they hire somebody and then I can't keep them.

I support the decision to raise wages for nurses and direct service providers. I think paying the staff more money would help. I also think that staff members need more training, so disabled people and the staff can make sure they are a good fit. Also, staff members should not have to

work for a lot of clients all at once, so they don't get stressed. Lastly, more background checks would help so that there is no discrimination.

I don't just speak for myself. Many other disabled Ohioans like me are counting on you, our legislators, to make a difference in our lives and the lives of helpers in our community. I want to live independently, but I also want to thrive. I hope you'll take my story into consideration when you decide on raising wages, providing more support for workers, and in general overhauling the entire way we support disabled people. Thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony. If you'd like to talk to me or have questions you can call me at 937-301-2926.