

Melissa Miller
Testimony on HB 33
Supporting the DD Workforce

My name is Melissa Miller, and I am submitting testimony as a Director of Operations for an agency that supports individuals in Ohio with developmental disabilities. Our agency has been in operation since 2005 and I have been working in the field since 1992. I am requesting legislators' support in favor for increasing funding to raise wages for works in the DD system. In 2023 the minimum wage in Ohio is 10.10 an hour. Places such as McDonalds will hire someone starting at \$14 an hour. Another burger restaurant, "Five Guys", starts at \$15 an hour. Agencies that provide supports and are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of an individual with Developmental Disabilities – May start as low at 10.50 an hour. The supports, training and dedication needed for a qualified staff member is far more cumbersome for someone entrusted in working with someone's life vs flipping a hamburger. Using the analogy of Direct Care vs Burger Restaurants: One involves assisting someone with ensuring they receive their medication, problem solving, medical care, assisting individuals in becoming involved with their community in order for them to live their best life. The other involves staff taking an order and maybe monitor how long fries have left until they have to pulled from the bin of grease. As the Director working to support individuals with DD there is little funding left over to assist staff members with medical coverage, competitive wages, and turnover. According to the 2023 Direct Support Professional Survey: "High turnover and low retention of (DSPs) continues to be a top-of-mind concern for (IDD) providers. The national turnover rate for DSPs has lingered around 50%, with some agencies having as many as one-in-eight DSP roles consistently vacant." With increased funding, agencies that provide services to those with DD will be able to increase wages and offer adequate health care coverage for staff members who are entrusted with the lives of others.