

[www.havar.org](http://www.havar.org)

396 Richland Ave.  
P.O. Box 460  
Athens, OH 45701  
740-594-3533  
740-593-3894 (fax)



416 Third St.  
P.O. Box 1107  
Marietta, OH 45750  
740-373-7175  
740-373-7116 (fax)

Shelby Rhodes, Executive Director  
**"Community Supports for Citizens with Disabilities"**

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Re: Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget

Senate Medicaid Committee

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and esteemed committee members,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Shelby Rhodes and I am the Executive Director of HAVAR, Inc., and we are located in South-eastern Ohio (operating in Athens, Washington, and Meigs Counties). HAVAR, Inc. provides essential day to day services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at home, in their employment, and in their communities via the Individual Options waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 120 employees are proud to provide these services to over eighty Ohio citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and very appreciative of the additional investments adopted by the House of Representatives in House Bill 33.

Up until the late 1960's and early 1970's, for most people with developmental disabilities had no option but to go to an institution for services. It is no secret (but probably a forgotten fact), that the conditions were deplorable in institutions (with rampant abuse, poor living conditions, neglect, understaffing, rights violations, etc.). It is because of changes many years ago and our industry that have allowed citizens with disabilities to return to their own communities and live as they wish. We never want to return to those days of institutionalization. However, the demand for staffing is great, and we must be able to offer a competitive wage to qualified job seekers. We




must be able to entice new staff and retain current staff with a living wage, as well as pay for goods and services necessary to remain a viable business.

We, as a non-profit, have had to forgo much needed maintenance on our offices in order to pay the best possible wages in our area. We struggle to pay for the rising costs of health benefits for our staff. In an undervalued and overlooked—but ironically essential—industry, we recognize the need for better funding to accomplish our mission of providing the kind of life quality to individuals with disabilities that they deserve, and we believe you must agree this is a worthy cause.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by HAVAR, Inc. We encourage this committee to support the House's version of H.B. 33 as it pertains to DODD appropriations. Further, we encourage the Senate to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages in Ohio to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans who so greatly depend upon them! Thank you once more, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Shelby Rhodes,

Executive Director for HAVAR, Inc.

[srhodes@havar.org](mailto:srhodes@havar.org)

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Athens, OH 45750  
740-594-3533

