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**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 Jo Spargo, the Executive Director of REM Ohio Inc, and we are located in over 40 Counties in Ohio. REM Ohio provides intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and residential, day, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 981 employees are proud to provide essential services to 909 Ohioans 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.

REM Ohio has provided services in Ohio since 1987. In our history, we have consistently, year after year, increased the services we offer to those in the DD arena. The last 2-3 years are the first time since opening our doors that we have seen a decrease in the supports we are able to offer. We are very limited in the amount of referrals we can take, are unable to support people 1:1 for needs in their family homes, and have seen a significant decrease in the overall amounts of supports we offer. All due to the lack of qualified employees we are able to recruit and hire.

As a mom to a young man with DD, I pride myself on building strong supports for families across the state that they can rely on and where our staff are supported. It has been heartbreaking to me personally to say to families that we cannot help them. I have managers who are supporting homes away from their personal home and only go home one time per month. The dedication is inspiring, but cannot last.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by REM Ohio. **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 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 need them! **Thank you again, 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.**

Jo Spargo

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