

**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
Senate Medicaid Committee**

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

My name is Andrew Schultz, and I am the admissions coordinator at Koinonia in Independence, Ohio. Koinonia serves over 350 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities over various programs. Programs include Intermediate Care Facilities, Waiver Congregate Homes, Adult Day Services, Vocational Habilitation and more. We work in many counties in Northeast Ohio.

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.

However, the funding, coming from Medicaid, still leaves DSPs making less than a competitive wage, in contrast to other industries. When direct support professionals are paid less than someone working at Target or McDonald's it is hard to attract DSPs and it is difficult to retain them. Many simply cannot make ends meet on the wages being paid. They often end up relying on government assistance, and other programs of social support.

The burden of a smaller and unstable workforce impacts those in our community who need care desperately. As the admissions coordinator for Koinonia, I have had to turn away individuals and their family seeking placement, because we do not have adequate staffing at some of our homes. When we have to turn a family away, as many organizations in or field do, we are placing a heavier burden on the families and current care givers of these individuals. This often leads to a lower quality of life, and less capacity for the caregivers to perform the tasks needed to keep their loved ones safe and healthy. We simply want to serve these individuals the best we are able, with staff paid for their dedication and hard work.

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 an average of \$20. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

Thank You for taking the time to understand my concerns today, and I appreciate the work you are doing on behalf of the people of Ohio,



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