

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

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and esteemed committee members, Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.

I am Derrick Bruggeman, and I work for Koinonia Homes in Cleveland OH. I have been working with individuals with Developmental Disabilities for 12 years now and it is my career and passion in my work life.

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.

Throughout my career there are two main reasons we have struggled with retaining employees, employee wages, and employees becoming burnt out from not having work life balance due to them not being able to live off the current wage they make. Most of the struggles have come around not having enough employees to cover shifts, this can cause many issues such as running out of ratio, providing the best service we can for the individuals we serve, and employees becoming burnt out from working too many hours. One of the homes I oversee, I didn't have a supervisor in my home for over two years because we could not find anyone that wanted to work at the home for the wage they would get, it was a struggle at times to find staffing for the home to cover the open shifts. Another one of the homes I oversee has not had full staff since before the pandemic, there has always been open shifts at this home and recently this has really affected the individuals, less community outings and less 1 on 1 time with the employees they depend on. Bill 33 will help our individuals have a better quality of life as we as an agency can provide a competitive wage for the employees that choose to work in this field.

One of the homes I oversee an individual that lives there has been deeply impacted by the shortage of staffing. He cannot go to a workshop because most workshops either do not have the staffing and because of this they cannot provide the proper care for him. It has also affected him because he is home the majority of the time and since we have struggled with finding staff for this home he does not get to go out in the community as often as he use to. He really enjoys going out to eat and to a store to buy candy, these are the two main outings that he enjoys doing. With this individual staying home most of the time we are starting to see more and more behavior issues with him, and it is a growing concern amongst his guardian and the people who are closest with him. I believe with better wages for our employees we can be more competitive and hire good employees who are passionate and want to provide the best life for the clients we serve.

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 read my testimony on Bill 33.

Derrick Bruggeman

Derrick Bruggeman
Dbruggr56@gmail.com
120 N Carpenter Rd. Brunswick, OH
937-638-9029