

**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 Stacey Rokoff, and I am the Vice President of Programs of Koinonia Homes, and we are located in Cuyahoga County. Koinonia Homes is a nonprofit organization that provides whole person, community based, care to IDD (intellectual and developmental disabilities) individuals. Koinonia has a wide-reaching presence throughout northeast Ohio. We operate over 60 homes throughout the region, allowing the individuals we serve to continue to reside in and be contributing members of the communities they know as home. This model of care is utilized throughout the state of Ohio, and it is a more sustainable and economical alternative to other methods of long-term care. This model has allowed IDD Ohioans to live longer and healthier lives. Our team of over 400 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 300 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and I am very appreciative of the additional investments adopted by the House of Representatives in House Bill 33. 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. We're confident this investment will enable us to reduce turnover, increase retention, and reduce hours dedicated to training and recruitment. It cannot be overstated how impactful continuity of care is for the individuals we serve. Institutional knowledge can only be built through a stable and revitalized workforce. We currently have open beds across our organization due to our staffing crisis as we cannot meet safe staffing ratios required by the state. Increasing the direct support professional wages will ensure we provide optimal care to our individuals and be a stable resource to the communities we serve, and the county board.

I have spent my entire career advocating for underserved populations. I am committed to ensuring everyone has a chance to live a quality and healthy life. As an organization, we are doing everything we can to give the individuals we serve the best possible quality of life. However, our organization is almost exclusively funded with Medicaid dollars, and the reimbursement rate we currently receive is not sustainable. While our industry faced funding challenges prior to COVID-19, the pandemic exacerbated them. We have been challenged with consolidating homes and staff shortage since COVID-19 began in 2020. Koinonia has been around for 47 years and is an anchor institution in Northeast Ohio. We need the resources to do better and provide the highest level of service possible.

Our organization is led by innovative professionals, who have found every creative way to sustain quality services. Throughout the pandemic, we have passionate and empathetic direct service providers, who provide essential care, companionship, and daily support to our individuals. The families of the individuals we serve depend on our services. Everyone who chooses to do this work truly cares about the people we serve, which causes us to have high goals and expectations for ourselves. However, innovation and creative solutions can only go so far, action by the General Assembly is needed for our long-term success.

We encourage and appreciate your support to ensure the vital services organizations like ours provide are available to the families and communities that rely on us. With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the thousands of Ohioans that so greatly need them.

Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey Rokoff". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a faint, light-colored circular border.

Stacey Rokoff, MSSA, LSW

srokoff@gmail.com

32710 Stony Brook Lane Solon, Ohio

Solon, Oh 44139

216.215.2230