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Akron Office

701 South Main Street
Akron, OH 44311-1019
p. 330-762-9755
f. 330-762-0912

Judith A. Read

Low Vision Services
701 South Main Street
Akron, OH 44311-1019
p. 330-762-9755
f. 330-996-4181

Firestone Park

1275 Sweitzer Avenue
Akron, OH 44301-1346
p. 330-379-3337
f. 330-379-3342

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**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
Senate Medicaid Committee
Submitted May 3, 2023**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

My name is Brian Thomas and I am the President/CEO of United Disability Services (UDS). We operate two physical locations in Akron (Summit County). UDS provides prevocational habilitation, adult day habilitation, homemaker/personal care and transportation services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our 116 employees skillfully and proudly provide essential services to more than 400 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

UDS is very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The changing labor landscape and the accompanying shortage of direct support professionals (DSPs) threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which the people we serve and their families rely.

You, our elected officials, allocate the funding for this system of human services, and you also approve the rates that are established for the services we provide. I respectfully ask that you recognize that that **allocations that go toward service provision for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities are far from adequate to cover the services, as those rates are very rarely adjusted, and never in a manner that keeps up with rising costs.**

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by UDS). 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 that so greatly need them! Again, thank you 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,

Brian W. Thomas