



Serving critical needs, one person at a time

HB 33 Proponent Testimony
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Ohio Senate Medicaid Committee
Chair Mark Romanchuk
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Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee, my name is Kristen Henry, and I am the Executive Director of Advocacy & Protective Services, Inc. (APSI). I am here today to provide proponent testimony on HB 33. APSI is a not-for-profit organization which **provides guardianship, advocacy, and protective services** according to Ohio law and by the authority of Ohio Probate Courts for adults 18 years of age and older who have a developmental disability. **APSI specializes in serving individuals with the highest level of needs in the least restrictive manner possible.**

APSI strongly supports the funding proposed by the DeWine Administration and Director Hauck, and maintained in the House-passed version of HB 33 for GRF 320412 Protective Services line item under the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). For 40 years, APSI has partnered with DODD to provide protective services for thousands of adults with developmental disabilities who are unable to make their own decisions and do not have a family member or other advocate to provide this support. This funding is critically important to ensure that these vulnerable individuals can receive the care and services they need to meet their daily needs and have the high quality of life they deserve.

The funds proposed in HB 33 will address longstanding workforce needs that have forced APSI to maintain a waitlist for services for over 10 years, with over 140 individuals currently unable to receive the services they need. While APSI prioritizes the most urgent needs in accepting new clients, individuals on APSI's waitlist may be waiting for medical or dental care, or may not have an advocate monitoring their care and quality of life. This funding will support competitive wages for the recruitment and retention of staff, which will lead to lower caseloads, higher quality services, and the elimination of our waitlist. This funding level will bring more parity to similar services within Ohio and in comparable states like Kentucky and Tennessee, which currently spend 50-100% more per person on these vitally important services. We strongly encourage the Senate to support this provision.

APSI also requests your support for a proposed amendment (currently being drafted) to HB 33 to clarify House-passed language to recognize supported decision-making as an option for individuals who do not need a guardian. Supported decision-making is a way for adults with developmental disabilities to identify the people in their lives who help them understand,

communicate, and implement daily life decisions without relinquishing the right to make those decisions. We are asking Ohio to recognize supported decision-making as an alternative to guardianship, which has also been done in states like Indiana, Texas, and Missouri. This proposal has no fiscal impact, but will have a tremendous impact on Ohioans with developmental disabilities who want support to navigate decisions about their services, living situations, finances, and medical care. The proposed amendment provides several updates clarifying the purpose of supported decision-making.

Lastly, APSI supports HB 33's investment in the necessary services that our clients receive from dedicated Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). DSPs provide the daily personal care services, supervision, and support that our clients literally could not live without. We have seen the impact of the DSP workforce crisis on our clients, many of whom have had to move, change jobs or day programs, or limit their activities because of the reduced capacity of providers throughout Ohio. We believe that this funding is an important step in meeting the daily care needs of our clients and improving their quality of life.

We know that competitive wages are critically important in order to ensure that committed DSPs can afford to choose to serve these individuals and that our clients and thousands of other individuals with developmental disabilities will have the services and support they need to live and thrive. APSI supports HB 33 as well as any additional support the General Assembly may be able to invest in recognition of these individuals' complex needs.

Chair Romanchuk and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify as a proponent on HB 33. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.