



Hattie Larlham Employment Services  
9772 Diagonal Road | 769 Brooksedge Blvd.  
Mantua, Ohio 44255 | Westerville, Ohio 43081  
(330) 274-2272 | (614) 486-4361

[hattielarlham.org](http://hattielarlham.org)

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

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

**I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.**

My name is Elizabeth Jones, and I am the Director of Day & Employment Services for Hattie Larlham. We provide services in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Delaware, Summit, Portage, Medina, Tuscarawas, and Stark County. Hattie Larlham provides a vast array of services including intermediate care and community-based residential services, adult day services, employment services, nursing, and early intervention education, all of which are administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 850+ employees is proud to provide essential services to over 1,500 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**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.**

I have been in the ID/DD field for 19 years and watched as the cost of living and the cost of doing business in Ohio has increased while our reimbursement rates have not. Over the last five years, the staffing shortage we were experiencing turned into a **staffing crisis**. Countless colleagues reluctantly left the field for jobs that have no meaning or value to them other than a better paycheck. Hattie Larlham knows the backbone of any ID/DD provider agency is its employees. Hattie Larlham has done everything possible to stay afloat and support our employees during this crisis, but the current funding does not meet our most basic needs. Hattie Larlham will not be able to continue to provide support and care to the 1,500 individuals we currently serve unless we are able to address our staffing needs.

My department supports 400+ individuals with disabilities as they obtain and retain employment. Local job markets and the greater community benefits when individuals with disabilities are active members of the workforce. With the right support and accommodations, individuals with disabilities have fulfilling careers which afford them greater independence and financial freedom.

There are numerous Ohioans with disabilities that want to work but cannot because ID/DD provider agencies like Hattie Larlham cannot meet the need given the staffing crisis. Ohioans with disabilities are being let go from their jobs for matters out of their control like being unable to find an employee to drive them to work or to provide them with job coaching. Currently, Hattie Larlham's Employment Services has 35+ job seekers on a waiting list for services. Opportunities for Ohioans with disabilities are diminishing.

The crisis not only affects people's ability to work in their community but every aspect of their lives. Now, people with disabilities are without direct support professionals to drive them to the grocery store, accompany them to church, take them to see friends, or cook them dinner. For the people with the highest needs including those that are medically fragile, unable to ambulate, self-feed, or toilet independently, having less support is a matter of life or death.



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House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Hattie Larlham. **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! **Thank you again, 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.**

Best Regards,

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