



Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center
3675 Walford Street
Columbus, Ohio 43224

(614) 447-0606 | (800) 233-8611
www.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 Emily Allen and I am the Director of Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center, and we are located in Columbus. Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center provides intervention services to young children in Franklin County. We deliver home-based, school-based, and blended programs to children from 18 months to 5-year-olds. We receive funding from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 24 employees are proud to provide essential services to 112 young 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.

For the past several school years, Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center has had difficulty hiring and retaining Assistant Teachers and Teacher's Aides. These positions are essential in assisting the Intervention Specialists (teachers) in providing activities and opportunities as outlined in Individual Family Service Plans and Individualized Education Programs. To be successful in the classroom, every Intervention Specialist needs the support of good team. The roles of Assistant Teachers and Teacher's Aides are invaluable to ensuring each child receives what they need while in our care – from diaper changes, to feeding, to play, to one-on-one education. Without being able to offer competitive pay for these positions, it is difficult to hire and retain employees with good skill sets and education backgrounds. Parents are entrusting us with their child's care and education and to do that, we need well-paid professionals.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center. **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.**

Emily Allen
Director, Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center
Emily.Allen@HattieLarlham.org