



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 Eric Matheny, and I am the Executive Director of the Achieving Potential division of the Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland (JFSA). JFSA provides a variety of services in Cuyahoga, Geauga, and Summit Counties for people with developmental disabilities, including an intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and residential, day programming, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of over 200 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 100 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. The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSPs), threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which the people we serve and their families rely. The workforce crisis has caused a contraction in our residential and day support services because of the difficulty we have had attracting and retaining staff. We are offering additional pay at many of our homes to get staff to continue working and are regularly seeing overtime rates over 25% across our workforce. Our caregivers are exhausted. With the current reimbursement rates we are receiving, providing quality services in a sustainable manner remains a struggle. As our workforce shrinks, we must continually take a hard look at who we can continue serving and who we will be left without care.

Ours is an ageing population, with the average age of our persons served nearing 55 years old. They are becoming more fragile and in need of additional supports and services for their health, safety, and wellbeing. Their families have entrusted us with their care, with the obligation to support them to greater independence and inclusion in their own communities. We bring peace of mind to these families who know that our staff are like family to their loved ones.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by JFSA. **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.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Matheny", with a long, sweeping underline.

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