

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

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

I am Quiana Tolliver the Human Resource Director at Koinonia Homes. We are an organization that provides whole person, community based, care to IDD individuals administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 500 plus employees are proud to provide essential services to 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 low wages that Direct Support Professionals currently receive make it difficult for us to attract and retain skilled staff, leading to staff shortages which leads to reduced access to care. Higher wages for DSPs can have a significant impact on healthcare provider's ability to recruit and retain skilled staff. By offering more competitive wages, providers can reduce the costs associated with training, and recruiting new staff, while also improving the quality of care provided. Additionally higher wages can enable employees to purchase private health insurance, which can lead to cost savings for the employee, employer, and government.

We continue to face challenges with retaining and recruiting due to low wages. The candidates that apply for DSP positions often find out the current wage and decline the position. Efforts to retain current support professionals and attract new ones are greatly impacted by low wages caused by current reimbursement rates. Ohio's Developmental Disabilities workforce crisis is different from other workforce shortages. Developmental disability providers are locked into reimbursement rates set by the State of Ohio. Low reimbursement rates for DSPs can pose significant challenges for healthcare providers like us who completely rely on Medicaid for funding their services.

Only actions by state officials can resolve this issue. By working together to address low reimbursement rates for Direct Support Professionals, we can help ensure that all individuals have access to high quality, compassionate care. I truly believe that with an increase in reimbursement rates we will see the staffing shortage decrease greatly in this field, with an increased compensation rate more quality skilled workers will have the desire to work in this field and stay in this field.

We encourage this committee to support the House's version of H.B. 33 as it pertains to DODD appropriations. We also encourage the Senate to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to an average of \$20. 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.

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