



May 5, 2023

**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 James Steffey and I am the CEO of Envision, and we are located in Cincinnati Ohio and provide services in Hamilton, Clermont, Warren and Butler counties. We are an organization that provides Homemaker/Personal Care, Non-medical Transportation, Adult Day Services, and Shared Living administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 170 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 600 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.

Turnover last year at Envision was over 40%. We currently have 22 open direct support professional positions. It seems like every week we lose another good, caring DSP from the field as they take jobs for higher pay in other industries (retail, fast food, warehouse, etc....). Because Envision's reimbursement is tied to Medicaid waiver rates, we have not been able to increase what we charge for services to meet the demand for higher wages like many businesses. We are also having a difficult time filling open positions as our starting wage, while average for our industry, is often well below the starting wage of jobs available in the marketplace. New people are not entering the field at a rate fast enough to keep pace with those who are leaving.

Because of the labor shortage, Envision is having to turn away new referrals for services – services that are critical to meeting the health and safety needs of the person with a disability. Without service providers the burden of care falls to family members. As a mother of a child we serve said to me this week, "My greatest fear in life is that I will outlive my child". No parent should have to hope to outlive their child because they fear that adequate care isn't available. It's time we take steps to ensure that people with disabilities have access to appropriate care and services.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Envision. **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 that reads "James Steffey".

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