



ECHOING HILLS

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget  
Senate Medicaid Committee

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, and committee members,

My name is Melissa Villani and I am the Director of Residential Services of Echoing Hills in SW Ohio, and we are located in Dayton, OH. We are an organization that provides recreational services, intermediate care facilities serving people with developmental disabilities, community based waiver services, and adult day services, administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of over 150 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 80 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and that is just in this region, Echoing Hills employs and serves many more people statewide.

The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which the people we serve and their families rely. I am truly thankful for the work the House has already done for people with Developmental Disabilities in Ohio, but more is needed.

As rewarding as it is to work with individuals with developmental disabilities, it comes with a lot more responsibility and liability than working at a fast food restaurant or retail store. Our direct support workers quite literally have people's lives in their hands. Often the choice to do this line of work is quickly turned down when they can make more money with less responsibility somewhere else.

It is vital that we are able to provide a meaningful life to those with developmental disabilities, where they can go into the community and be part of it. Where people don't have to feel like a burden for needing help with basic human needs such as showers, going to the bathroom and eating meals. Where they can be safe and healthy but also have a fulfilled life with friends and family and be a real member of the community with not only social and leisure opportunities, but also things like community employment and volunteering. Without higher wages we will only be able to offer basic services and that is not what a person needs to live a meaningful life.



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The House Budget, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Echoing Hills. I encourage this committee to approve more funding for DODD and to invest additional dollars to raise direct support professional wages to \$20.00. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide 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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