

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

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and esteemed committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.

My name is William Kiley Ritt, and I have been serving those with developmental and intellectual disabilities for a decade as a psychotherapist, direct care staff member and a manager. This is a long time for me but a small fraction of time when compared with my employer agency that has been serving since 1974. Koinonia is located in Independence, Ohio and serves people around the clock in employment and residential settings. Our goal is to help people live lives of opportunity, health, and enjoyment.

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.

Those who work in this industry do so because they feel compelled, compelled to help those who need it so that they can live wonderful lives. As a therapist, I have seen the changes firsthand to the care that can be offered across the state. When working for my local county board of developmental disabilities I saw how challenging it became to find any workers to come and provide the care that helps people live. This is not an optional service for many individuals with disabilities, this is a matter of safety and health.

The individuals we serve used to be directly involved within their own communities, attending workshops, going on outings, and being contributing members of society with the help of their staff. Due to staffing concerns, many of these outings no longer happen because of the lack of staffing required to support them. Instead, individuals remain in their homes with limited staffing and lack of opportunity. This is having a direct impact on their mental health, ability to thrive and their life satisfaction.

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 an average of \$20. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

William Kiley Ritt

William K Ritt,
Ttiryelik@gmail.com,
7379 Salida Rd. Mentor-on-the-Lake, OH 44060.
440-477-1695