

**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.

I am a registered nurse at Koinonia Homes and have worked in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) for over 26 years. I can't imagine doing anything else other than continuing to provide needed services and being an advocate for this underserved and sometimes, not equally recognized, population. I, along with Koinonia homes, strive to help achieve equality and quality of care for the individuals served.

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.

Koinonia relies on Medicaid funding as the pay source and the rates are severely outdated. Over the years, funding has not kept up with rising costs, inflation, and wage changes. Koinonia has had to close some programs and I fear that more individuals we serve will need to move or be discharged because of staffing.

Our services are complicated, and we need to stay competitive to draw in an elite group to not only learn what to do, but to understand why they do it. But we also need them to be able to survive financially, which is difficult to do when we are forced to compete with retail and fast-food wages.

We need more to hire staff that will help provide the much-needed services our individuals deserve to continue to support and enhance their quality of life. What some take for granted daily, are opportunities for growth and enrichment for someone with IDD. Our individuals are lacking overall opportunity because of critical staffing issues.

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 for your time and the opportunity to testify.

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