



THE SOCIETY FOR HANDICAPPED CITIZENS  
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**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget  
Senate Medicaid Committee**

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**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 Shelly Wharton and I am the Associate Executive Director of The Society for Handicapped Citizens of Medina County, Inc., and we are located in Medina, Ashland, Huron and Wayne counties. The Society provides residential care in both intermediate care and through home and community based waiver settings, adult day services, non-medical transportation and respite care and short term stays administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 140 employees are proud to provide essential services to 200+ 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.**

We have served individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families for 70 years. Pressure to find and keep staff has grown over the last decade due to low reimbursement rates along with inadequate funding for healthcare benefits. The work our Direct Support Professionals (DSP) do each day requires more competencies than other similar fields (STNA), but for which funding and pay rates do NOT equate. The state itself offers their DSPs \$20.64/hour plus benefits we will NEVER be able to match. The work is the same; however, the value placed on who is delivering it is not. We need your support to change that narrative.

The services our DSPs provide are important to each individual we serve and their families. Our individuals needs may vary, but one thing that they all have in common is that they require the support of professionals to live their best lives. Further, the services we provide also support families – who are able to remain in the workforce and pay taxes and know that their adult children/family members are being taken care of in a professional environment

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by The Society. **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.**

*Shelly Wharton*  
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