The Cincy Hat Foundation

Proponent Testimony — House Bill 585

House Community Revitalization Committee

March 17, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Matt Renie, Executive Director and Co-Founder of The Cincy Hat Foundation, a Cincinnati-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to creating affordable independent living opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Cincy Hat Foundation was launched in October 2024 alongside my best friend and co-founder, Cincinnati Bengals center Ted Karras. What began as Ted gifting hats to teammates quickly became a grassroots fundraising phenomenon, raising over $2 million to benefit the IDD community — first in Indianapolis, and now right here in Cincinnati. We have funded full-ride scholarships through the University of Cincinnati's Transition and Access Pathways program, and we are now turning our attention to where the need is most urgent: housing.

Our first development is a five-unit apartment building in Madisonville, Ohio. It will house adults with IDD who want to live independently in a safe, supportive environment, with a live-in community resource person to serve as a first point of contact for residents and property management. We fundraised approximately $1.3 million in charitable donations to build a $1.1 million project. We are already scoping out our second development.

I want to be honest with this committee about something fundamental: **this housing cannot be built sustainably using conventional debt financing.** The rental rates that adults with IDD can actually afford do not generate enough income to service construction debt at today's costs. This is not a gap that the private market will fill. It is not a gap that most public financing programs fully bridge for small-scale, community-integrated developments like ours. The Cincy Hat Foundation exists precisely because charitable capital is the only mechanism that can make this math work and deliver safe, dignified housing to people who need it most.

Why House Bill 585 Matters to Us

House Bill 585 directly removes barriers that today prevent nonprofits like ours from accessing Community Capital Assistance funds to build the kind of housing our residents want and need.

First, the current rule limits CCA-funded housing to single-family homes, duplexes, and quadplexes. Our five-unit model exceeds that cap. A small apartment building with a community resource unit is exactly the kind of setting that balances independence with the light-touch support our residents benefit from. HB 585 expands eligible housing types to include the multi-unit structures that actually serve this population.

Second, the ability to blend CCA funds with other financing sources is transformative for our model. Because we rely entirely on charitable capital, the ability to layer CCA funds alongside donor contributions would meaningfully extend our reach — allowing us to build more units, serve more residents, and accelerate the pace of our development pipeline. Without blending, nonprofits like ours are effectively locked out of a program that was designed for exactly the people we serve.

Third, removing the prohibition on adjacent structures is critical as we grow. The ability to build a portfolio of adjacent or nearby properties is central to how we create connected, supported communities — not isolated units scattered across a county.

The Cincy Hat Foundation is a testament to the CIncinnati community's generosity. Construction is becoming very expensive and current debt levels make building affordable units for the IDD population essentially impossible. Charitable fundraising can get us started, but cannot solve a structural housing crisis. House Bill 585 gives tools like the CCA program the flexibility to meet this moment — to support more housing, in more forms, for more people with developmental disabilities across Ohio.

We are proud proponents of this bill. We urge the committee to advance it. I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Renie

Executive Director & Co-Founder

The Cincy Hat Foundation

Cincinnati, Ohio