Proponent Testimony on House Bill 585

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Chairman Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer and members of the House Community Revitalization Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 585 which would better align the Community Capital Assistance program with the evolving housing needs and lived experiences of Ohioans with developmental disabilities.

Ohio's 88 county boards were founded by families in 1967 to ensure that those with intellectual and developmental disabilities have access to the services and supports they need to live safe, healthy, and independent lives in their communities. Today, county boards continue that mission through early intervention services, service and support administration, crisis response and connections to home-and community-based services for more than 117,000 Ohioans and their families.

As Ohio continues to promote inclusive, community-based living, the CCA program must reflect the diversity of a person's preferences, the realities of today's housing market, and the innovations that many counties and housing partners are eager to implement. Because of this, we are supportive of House Bill 585's goal of expanding the use of CCA funds for additional housing options.

Those with developmental disabilities deserve access to housing options that reflect how people of all abilities live. Enabling CCA funds to support the development of multi-unit properties where a portion of units are reserved for people with disabilities promotes both accessibility and integration. Similarly, flexibility to develop on more than one structure or adjacent parcel when appropriate allows for thoughtful, inclusive neighborhood-based models.

Additional flexibility is needed to expand the use of CCA resources to be blended with compatible funding streams, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and other housing development tools. Leveraging CCA funds in this way has the potential to expand development of high-quality, universally designed housing and increase the capacity of accessible housing needed for people with disabilities served by county boards.

House Bill 585 is important because it continues to reinforce the importance of involving people with disabilities in decisions about where and how they live. This includes clear expectations that those receiving services have meaningful opportunities to participate in choosing their future homes.

Ohio's service system benefits when the built environment supports autonomy, cost-effective care, and social inclusion. By embracing a wider range of allowable structures such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or separate buildings on a shared parcel, House Bill 585 can support creative opportunities for individualized supports while addressing challenges such as aging caregivers, co-housing preferences, and proximity-based service delivery.

Additionally, House Bill 585 creates a pathway for the Director of the Department of Developmental Disabilities to consider time-limited or project-specific waivers that will enable promising proposals that reflect local needs to move forward, without requiring wholesale rule changes. This flexibility is especially important as housing innovation evolves and service delivery models continue to shift.

The changes made in House Bill 585 would help ensure that the Community Capital Assistance program continues to advance the work to support people with disabilities in living meaningful lives in the community. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 585. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.