



**Testimony on SFY 26/27 Operating Budget
House Finance Committee
March 12, 2025**

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Ohio's evolving system of supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is honor to be a part of this panel, together, this dedicated group of professionals have been advocating for our system since 2020.

I come before you with two important messages: one of **gratitude** and one focused on how we can continue to work together to ensure a **stable and sustainable future** for our system.

Two years ago, I addressed this body with a message of **urgency**. Our system was facing an unprecedented workforce crisis—one unlike anything we've seen before.

Working in our field is among the most challenging and rewarding jobs, but we were losing staff across the state to higher-paying positions in non-critical jobs. We sought your support to stabilize our workforce, and **you responded with a clear commitment to Ohioans with developmental disabilities, their families and the providers who support them**. Thank you.

Because of your dedication, we left July 2023 with hope. Hope because of your belief in us as demonstrated by your investment. The funding we received provided much-needed relief, and many providers were able to stabilize their workforce for the first time in years. As a direct result of your belief and investment:

- **As Promised, Starting DSP wages have increased and professionals are staying and returning back to our field, Stabilization was realized**
- **Employee Vacancy rates have decreased by 33%.** Before the increase unfilled positions, were at 21% and climbing. That number is 14% ... again stabilization was realized.
- **Quality has improved.** In a survey of coalition members, 97% said their ability to provide quality services has stayed the same or improved since the rate increases went into effect.¹

Your support and partnership made a significant difference, and for that, we **thank you**.

¹ DD Budget Coalition Survey conducted 2024.

We were clear throughout the budget process that **protecting your investment would require and ongoing commitment and increases**. Without them, wages will stagnate and DSPs will leave for better paying jobs that offer periodic increases. The Governor's budget does not include any such increases for home and community-based services.

We are asking for your support to ensure the progress we've made is not lost. We cannot slip back into the crisis we faced just two years ago. The Governor's budget "fills the gap" left by one-time ARPA funds, a gap we knew would need filled.

But that is not enough to sustain our progress. We are asking for small, incremental waiver rate increases that allow providers to increase wages and keep up with the real cost of delivering services.

Specifically, on the waiver side, we are asking the General Assembly to:

1. **Include a rate increase for waiver providers** to keep up with the real costs of delivering service while sustaining their workforce.
 - **3.4%** increase on January 1, 2026
 - **Additional 2.3%** increase on January 1, 2027
2. **Establish a mechanism for ongoing increases** to prevent future funding crises.
 - Include proposed **language** that allows DODD to work with system partners to establish a **mechanism for ongoing increases** and prevent future funding crises.

Lastly, ours is a **lifespan system** – it is not "long term services and supports" – it is life span services and support.

As such, we stand behind the Governor's proposals to: **allow the ICF formula to run; continue the professional workforce development add-on in ICFs for one fiscal year; continue funding for multi-system youth, technology first, and employment first; and increase funding for early intervention**, all of which are vital to the long-term health of the system.

It is an honor to stand before you today to ask for your continued support and partnership as we work together to build a system that not only serves Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities but also leads the nation in innovation and care. We have outstanding individuals working in this field, and it is a privilege to serve those who rely on our support across this great state.

In the coming testimony, today and next week, you will hear directly from the people whose lives are impacted by the decisions you make. They will share their stories of workforce stabilization and emphasize the need to maintain momentum in our efforts. These are

HB96 Testimony – House Finance
Pete Moore/OPRA

individuals of integrity, fully dedicated to ensuring that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive the care they deserve.

Thank you for your time, and we are happy to answer questions at the conclusion of our panel's testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pete" and last name "Moore" clearly distinguishable.

Peter J. Moore, President & CEO
Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA)