



Testimony for Best Buddies in Ohio
H.B. No. 96: Make state operating appropriations for FY 2026-27 for Best Buddies
Position: Favorable
House of Representatives Finance Committee
Wednesday, April 2, 2025
Room 313

To: Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, and members of the Finance Committee
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Hello. My name is Catlin Skufca, and I am the State Director for Best Buddies in Ohio. Best Buddies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides opportunities for one-to-one friendships and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, we serve more than 2,000 Ohioans with and without disabilities through Best Buddies Chapters in 58 schools throughout the state.

Physical and social barriers inhibit interactions between students with disabilities and their typical peers, those that don't have disabilities. Students with disabilities often spend the majority of their school day in a separate setting. That means they don't have natural interactions in the classroom or during informal situations such as at lunchtime. Our time-tested friendship programs create a simple and effective pathway through these barriers, creating opportunities for meaningful social interactions.

Best Buddies is a life-changing experience for a person with intellectual disabilities. For these young people, developing social skills is essential to a successful transition out of school and into the working world and community life. As a result of participation in our programs, youth with disabilities gain social and leadership skills that lead to their increased sense of self-worth, employability, and independence. Additionally, Best Buddies transforms attitudes regarding the needs and natural abilities of people with disabilities. Participants without disabilities, the typical peers, become more aware that people with disabilities have many abilities and can hold community-based jobs. They, in turn, are willing to work at a company that employs people with and without disabilities.

Securing support from the state of Ohio would empower Best Buddies to fill a gap in school and community-based services offered to Ohioans with disabilities. We seek a level appropriation of \$500,000 each year of the biennium. In addition to supporting our current participants, it would fund expansion to 70 schools and an additional 2,000 students throughout the state. The reach of our programs would positively impact the lives of at least 40,000 residents across the state of Ohio.

I am joined today by a Best Buddies friendship match, Logan Magliery and Sophia Woodell; and they would like to share how Best Buddies has impacted them.