



**Testimony for Best Buddies in Ohio**  
**H.B. No. 96: Make state operating appropriations for FY 2026-27**  
**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

From: Trisha Zimpfer, Parent of a Best Buddies Participant  
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Hello, my name is Trisha Zimpfer. My family and I moved from Washington to Ohio last March. We have two children, a son who was then in 8th grade and a daughter who was in 7th grade. Our daughter, Erin, was born with Down Syndrome and is a spunky, happy, funny, hard-working, and empathetic child.

Erin is no stranger to change and has had to adapt to new environments and schools on multiple occasions when we moved for my husband's job. We arrived in Columbus when there were seven weeks left in the school year before summer break, and I hoped both kids would make some friends before school got out. Our son plays sports and started attending workouts within weeks of our move. Thankfully, the middle school where our kids would attend had a program called Best Buddies that turned out to be a lifesaver for our family and Erin. Through Best Buddies and the amazing student leaders who participated in the program, Erin had immediate friends and social opportunities.

For kids with disabilities, the gap widens between typical peers more as time passes which makes a move in middle school pretty difficult. My husband and I had concerns for how Erin's peers would treat and react to her as a teenager, but our concerns were unfounded, and Best Buddies had a lot to do with that. She was busy right away and over the summer attending breakfast outings, pool visits, movies, etc. In addition, two of her friends from Best Buddies taught her cheers and encouraged her to join the school cheerleading team in the fall, which turned into an amazing experience for Erin.

We feel so lucky to live in the state of Ohio and have our daughter thrive under

programs such as Best Buddies. The premise of pairing individuals with disabilities and their typical peers is a win for everyone, and Best Buddies has mastered this idea. The benefits of including individuals with disabilities in our communities are innumerable as Best Buddies has proven again and again. We are all different and have something to contribute to the world. Best Buddies helps encourage people of all abilities to show their worth and be all that they can be.