

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 96
House Health Committee
February 28, 2025

Amanda Sue Fontana,
MSW

Chair Jean Schmidt, Vice Chair Kellie Deeter, Ranking Minority Member Anita Somani, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Amanda Sue Fontana. I am the mother of a 23-year-old young lady whose name is Lilli. Lilli was born with severe developmental disabilities, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, and she is profoundly Deaf. My testimony is in support of continued funding for the Medicaid Waiver programs and the allowance of rate increases for Home and Community Based Services and supports.

Until Lilli was 18 years old, we lived in extreme poverty, having to utilize all public assistance programs. The extent of Lilli's disabilities allowed childcare centers to prohibit her access into their programs due to the increased cost of her needs. This meant that I could only work the hours Lilli was in school. No evenings, weekends, holidays, not during her Christmas and Easter breaks, or summers, because I had to be home to care for Lilli. Needless to say, I was unable to find work due to the inflexibility of my schedule. However, I could and did utilize the time she was in school to get my GED, my Associate's degree in Human and Social Services, a certification in American Sign Language, a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, and my Master's degree in Social Work. It took me twelve years, and I have just started my first year as an adjunct professor in the Social Work field. When Lilli graduated from school at age 22, those hours became even more limited because she could only attend her adult day program for five hours, two days a week. My ability to teach classes is restricted because I must be home to care for Lilli.

Fortunately, Lilli has a Medicaid Waiver that allowed me to get certified through the state to become her paid caregiver. This is wonderful because I happen to be the only provider in our county who is also certified in American Sign Language. Therefore, I am the only provider with whom Lilli is able to communicate without the use of a sign language interpreter.

We are no longer below the poverty line because the Medicaid Waiver allows me to be Lilli's paid provider. Most importantly, it is the only reason Lilli can live at home with her mother and siblings.

I am asking for your continued support of the Medicaid Waiver funding and the allowance for rate increases for the essential services, and supports for the many Ohioans with disabilities, like my daughter Lilli.

Your consideration of my testimony is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Amanda Sue Fontana