



**Testimony on SFY 26/27 Operating Budget
House Health Committee**

Chairwoman Schmidt, Vice-Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and esteemed committee members,

My name is Doreen Ehlert, and I am the CEO of Ability Works, and we are located in Sandusky, Ohio but we serve individuals in Sandusky, Ottawa, Huron, Erie, and Lorain. We are an organization that provides day, employment, home and personal care, transportation, community respite, and transportation services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) as well as employment and vocational training through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). Our team of 54 employees are proud to provide essential services to 278 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

First, I want to express our deep gratitude for the investment in disability and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in the last state budget. Your support allowed Ohioans with disabilities access and resources to find, keep and succeed at meaningful jobs in their communities.

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of the budget initiative proposed by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) as outlined in House Bill 96. These initiatives help ensure that all Ohioans have access to the resources and opportunities to be successful in the workforce and their chosen careers. The budget proposal also supports accessibility initiatives, internship opportunities, and state partnerships that help Ohioans with disabilities live, work and thrive in their communities.

Many of the individuals and families depend on our organization for services that assist them in working, living skills, and providing support daily.

The budget initiatives for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, guided by the leadership of Director Miller, will reinforce and strengthen the services provided by Ability Works. We encourage this committee to support the OOD budget proposal as outlined in HB 96.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! Thank you again for the opportunity and privilege to bring my testimony before you today.

Doreen Ehlert, CEO of Ability Works