



*Serving critical needs, one person at a time*

HB 96 Interested Party Testimony  
Kristen Henry, Executive Director  
Advocacy & Protective Services, Inc.  
Ohio House Health Committee  
Chair Jean Schmidt  
March 6, 2025

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Kristen Henry, and I am the Executive Director of Advocacy & Protective Services, Inc. (APSI). I am here today to provide interested party testimony on HB 96. APSI is a not-for-profit organization which **provides guardianship, advocacy, and protective services** according to Ohio law and by the authority of Ohio Probate Courts for adults 18 years of age and older who have a developmental disability. **APSI specializes in serving individuals with the highest level of needs in the least restrictive manner possible.**

APSI requests support for an amendment (HC0508) to increase the funding proposed by the DeWine Administration in HB 96 for GRF 320412 Protective Services line item under the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). For over 40 years, APSI has partnered with DODD to provide protective services for thousands of adults with developmental disabilities who are unable to make their own decisions and do not have a family member or other advocate. This funding—an additional \$1.405 million in FY26 and \$1.805 million in FY27—is critically important to ensure that these vulnerable individuals can receive the care and services they need to meet their daily needs and have the high quality of life they deserve.

The as-introduced version of HB 96 funds these critical protective services at the same level in FY26 and FY27 as FY25. Flat funding would erode APSI's capacity to continue serving our nearly 3,000 clients at a time when we are being asked to serve over 150 new clients each year and we continue to have a waitlist of Ohioans in need of our services.

The funds proposed in this amendment will support competitive wages for the recruitment and retention of staff, which will lead to lower caseloads, higher quality services, and the elimination of our waitlist. This funding level will bring more parity to similar services within Ohio and in comparable states like Kentucky and Tennessee, which currently spend 50-100% more per person on these vitally important services.

Additionally, APSI strongly supports the provisions in HB 96 to recognize supported decision-making in Ohio law. Supported decision-making is a way for adults with developmental disabilities to identify the people in their lives who help them understand, communicate, and implement daily life decisions without relinquishing the right to make those decisions. We are asking Ohio to recognize supported decision-making as an alternative to guardianship, which has also been done in states like Indiana, Illinois, Texas, and Missouri. This proposal has no fiscal impact, but will have a tremendous impact on Ohioans with developmental disabilities who want support to navigate decisions about their services, living situations, finances, and medical care.

Chair Schmidt and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify as an interested party on HB 96. I will be happy to answer any questions at this time.