



Testimony of Kari Jones, President & CEO, ElevateDD
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 Kari Jones, and I am the President & CEO of ElevateDD, a statewide advocacy organization serving thousands of Ohioans with developmental disabilities and their families. ElevateDD is dedicated to increasing authentic inclusion for people with developmental disabilities by amplifying voices, supporting families, illuminating opportunities, and launching innovative solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the initiatives outlined in the budget for the benefit of this population of Ohioans. The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities strives to listen to and honor the needs and choices of people with developmental disabilities and their families, and ElevateDD is a proud partner in these efforts.

In our field, there is a phrase and sentiment that drives advocacy and leadership among people with developmental disabilities and their families, “Nothing about us, without us.” Efforts to add language acknowledging Supported Decision-Making as a path for families also recognizes the need to educate more Ohioans on this option. Requested by people with developmental disabilities as well as advocates, this approach allows for more independence while providing for support when needed. Like DODD, ElevateDD respects the use of guardianship when necessary while also providing education about alternative plans.

Supporting the critical workforce of Direct Service Providers benefits families in our community. Direct Support Professionals are essential members of care teams, and they should be fairly compensated for the critical role they play within our system of care. We appreciated the efforts to ensure increased wages for the Direct Support Professionals within the last state budget, and appreciate the continued and critical investment for the next biennium budget. For many with developmental disabilities, community access and authentic inclusion could not be achieved without Direct Support Professionals.

These issues, along with investing in technology support, continued investment in innovating critical care of youth with complex needs, and increased rates for providers who support Ohioans dependent on ventilators, are all initiatives that align with the mission of ElevateDD, and we are appreciative to see funding allocated to efforts that will allow the developmental disabilities community to thrive.

Thank you for your leadership, interest, and commitment to Ohio’s developmental disabilities community.

Kari Jones
President & CEO
ElevateDD

