



Testimony for Best Buddies in Ohio
H.B. No. 96
Position: Favorable
Ohio Senate Finance Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Catlin Skufca, and I am the State Director for Best Buddies in Ohio. Best Buddies is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides opportunities for one-to-one friendships and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, we serve more than 2,000 Ohioans with and without disabilities through Best Buddies Chapters in 58 schools throughout the state.

Best Buddies is a life-changing experience for a person with intellectual disabilities. For these young people, developing social skills is essential to successfully transitioning out of school and into the working world and community life. Best Buddies also transforms attitudes regarding the needs and abilities of people with disabilities.

We are here today to ask for your support of Chairman Romanchuk's budget amendment, which would fund Best Buddies at \$150,000 per year for each year of the biennium through the Department of Developmental Disabilities. This funding is critical to maintaining our services throughout the state, allowing youth with disabilities to gain social and leadership skills that lead to their increased sense of self-worth, employability, and independence.

I am joined today by a Best Buddies friendship match, Rory Fellows and Alicia Scoggins from Central Crossing High School, who will share how Best Buddies has impacted them.

Catlin Skufca, State Director
2814 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113
CatlinSkufca@BestBuddies.org
(614) 928-3383

Hello Senators, my name is Rory Fellows. I am a sophomore at Central Crossing High School, and I am proud to serve as the President of our Best Buddies Friendship Chapter.

Best Buddies has taught me something truly important: at our core, all people are more alike than we are different. I was matched with my buddy, Alicia, and getting to know her has been one of the most meaningful parts of my life. Alicia radiates confidence; she knows what she wants and goes after it. No matter the day, she always finds a way to make me laugh. Through Alicia, I've come to see she has the same hopes, dreams, and determination as anyone else. Being in a different classroom does not make her any less driven or capable. Best Buddies allows students like Alicia to be involved, feel seen, and be part of the school community.

This mission is also deeply personal for me. My uncle, who has a disability, grew up in the 1960s. He is one of the kindest souls I know, but back then, he didn't have access to the opportunities that exist today. He was isolated, not because of his abilities, but because of prejudice. Best Buddies changes that. It gives people like my uncle a chance to feel included, supported, and valued, like they have a family at school.

No two people are the same, which makes these friendships so powerful. Alicia has truly changed my life, and I hope more students can have the chance to connect with someone like her.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Rory Fellows, Best Buddies Participant
2479 Bloxom Street
Grove City, OH, 43123
(614) 966-5108**

Hi, my name is Alicia Scoggin. I am a freshman at Central Crossing High School. I have been in Best Buddies for one year. Thank you for inviting me to testify on why Best Buddies is so important.

My buddy, Rory, is always kind and has a positive attitude. She is respectful and has taught me a lot about myself. She accepts me for who I am. When Rory and I are together, she always lets me talk about things I love, like music by Michael Jackson. I love having Rory as my best buddy.

We have had a few events this school year. The matching party was my favorite because Rory did not let me be alone. She brought me out of my shell at that party and showed me what having a true friend was like.

Being matched with Rory has given me the chance to get out of the house and grow as a more confident person. I cannot wait to have more time with her.

Every school in Ohio should have a Best Buddies chapter because everyone should have a friend who makes them smile and make memories with, like Rory does with me. Thank you very much.

Alicia Scoggin, Best Buddies Participant
4500 Big Run South Road
Grove City, OH 43123-9687
(614) 625-4741