

Testimony on HB 96 (FY26-27 State Budget)
by Adam Herman, CEO
Ohio Association of County Boards of DD
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Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Finance Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACB), thank you for the opportunity to testify on Substitute House Bill 96. Ohio's 88 county boards of developmental disabilities support more than 107,000 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by providing funding, planning support, and a diverse range of services that promote happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

County boards are concerned about the following Senate changes to Sub. House Bill 96:

First, Section 5705.32-35, which provides vague, non-instructive, and expansive authority to county budget commissions (CBCs) to arbitrarily reduce millage on any voter-approved tax levy aside from a debt levy if the commission finds it “reasonably necessary or prudent” to “avoid unnecessary, excessive, or unneeded property tax collections.”

- a. This provision is overly vague, offering no clear guidance to local officials beyond subjective terms like “reasonably necessary,” “prudent,” “excessive,” or “unneeded,” and removes the existing protection that prevents county budget commissions from considering DD board reserve accounts when determining acceptable levels of resources on hand.
- b. These reserves, established by the General Assembly, are critical set-asides intended to ensure the lifetime support of people with developmental disabilities. Including reserves—along with nonexpendable trust funds often created by families for specific, dedicated purposes—risks local misinterpretation and puts the long-term stability of Ohio's DD system in fiscal jeopardy.
- c. Given that this provision was added without any input from people with developmental disabilities, their family members, and the tightly interwoven network of county boards, provider agencies, and state officials who work collaboratively to ensure the health and safety of more than 107,000 individuals in this state, this provision should be removed entirely.
- d. Ohio is one of the very few states where local property taxes fund both DD services and the state's share of Medicaid for people with developmental disabilities. County boards of DD currently cover about half of the state's Medicaid match for these services—an estimated \$567 million in SFY 2025, projected to rise to \$628 million in SFY 2026 and \$691 million in SFY 2027.
- e. Arbitrary limits to funding sources that support this substantial contribution could either jeopardize essential services for individuals with DD and their families or force the state to cover the hole left by a lack of a local match to maintain lifelong supports.

Our request: OACB is seeking support for the inclusion of amendment **SC2924** that would remove this language from the budget and allow the legislative process to continue as designed, thereby allowing people with developmental disabilities, their family members, and system advocates to participate in this process.

However, should the General Assembly feel strongly that this provision must be included, OACB would respectfully request a compromise amendment be accepted to exempt any local entities that are statutorily required by the Ohio Revised Code to pay a portion or all of the State of Ohio's federal Medicaid match obligation from this provision. This amendment, **SC2925**, would allow county boards to continue to use the funds resoundingly approved by voters to provide the necessary supports for people with developmental disabilities.

Our second concern relates to Section 5126.222, which creates brand-new language for a mandated 30-day web-based training program for all newly-hired Service and Support Administrators, or case managers, who work at county boards of DD.

- a. The proposed statutory training requirement is unnecessary and duplicative, as similar requirements already exist in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) and are effectively monitored through DODD's accreditation process.
- b. Neither county boards nor DODD requested this change, and there are no known issues with current compliance.
- c. The legislature already has oversight through the JCARR process, which allows for appropriate review and flexibility as workforce needs evolve.
- d. The draft bill's 30-day compliance window is overly burdensome for new hires and lacks the adaptability of the existing process in administrative rule. This provision should be removed from the bill, as it imposes rigid rules to solve a problem that doesn't exist.

OACB is seeking support for the inclusion of amendment **SC2927** that would eliminate this language. However, if the General Assembly feels firmly that this should be a statutory requirement, county boards strongly believe that a compromise is possible by changing the requirement to permit up to 90 days to complete this training regimen instead of the current 30-day requirement, which does not reflect the reality of a high-turnover position like SSAs.

A 90-day requirement also aligns with the requirements of the Ohio Administrative Code for other SSA training topics that must be addressed within 90 days, which has been proven effective over the years with the oversight of DODD. If a compromise were the preference of the General Assembly, we would request support for the inclusion of amendment **SC3080**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of our concerns. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.