

HB 96 Interested Party Testimony
Lisa Von Lehmden, Executive Director
Ohio Council for Home Care & Hospice
Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee
Chair Roegner
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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lisa Von Lehmden, and I am honored to appear before you today as the Executive Director of the Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice (OCHCH). I also serve as the owner of Luxe Healthcare@Home. My dual role gives me both the strategic and frontline perspective of the workforce crisis facing Ohio's home and community-based services (HCBS) sector.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to a revised but still vital funding request. While the original House version of this proposal included a \$5 million investment over two years, we have worked with stakeholders to revise our request to \$2 million over two years – a more targeted approach that allows us to lay the foundation for long-term impact through deeper partnerships with two Ohio colleges.

Specifically, we propose to collaborate directly with one college in Northeast Ohio, serving the Cleveland metropolitan area and its surrounding counties, and another in Southeast Ohio, a region that continues to face rural health care access challenges and will require additional support as Ohio prepares to roll out the *MyCare* expansion in 2026.

This initiative – part of the *Center for Community-Based Care* – seeks to integrate HCBS into nursing education, providing not only clinical exposure but real-world application of what it means to serve Ohioans in their homes. These are our seniors, our neighbors with disabilities, and our medically complex patients who cannot access care through traditional, facility-based models.

We believe deep, intentional partnerships with these two colleges will create meaningful dialogue between academia and the front lines of care. By shaping curricula, embedding internship opportunities, and jointly designing mentorship models, we can prepare students not just to *graduate*, but to *thrive* in home-based care environments.

The revised \$2 million investment will support:

- **Scholarships** for LPNs, RNs, and BSN students – particularly those completing their junior and senior years or transitioning through LPN-to-RN bridge programs.
- **Internships and externships** within HCBS settings, placing students directly in homes under skilled supervision.
- **Mentorship funding for agencies** to support new graduates during their critical first six months of practice, focusing on clinical decision-making, patient engagement, and professional development.
- **Workforce capacity building**, enabling each trained nurse to case manage up to 30 patients at a time—cycling through six groups annually and impacting thousands of lives.

This effort is more than a funding request. It is a call to transform how we train and deploy nurses in Ohio. A nurse who understands home care from the start of their education is more likely to choose this pathway. And with Ohio's aging population, Medicaid waiver expansions, and shifting care preferences, the need has never been greater.

As we prepare for the 2026 *MyCare* rollout, the demand for skilled, flexible, community-based care providers will rise dramatically. Southeast Ohio, in particular, will need a robust local workforce to respond to this demand. Our initiative addresses that need head-on.

Our conversations with these institutions will go beyond simple program design. We will co-create solutions, invest in faculty understanding of HCBS, and build pathways that start in the classroom and end in meaningful employment – helping students see that home care is not a stepping stone but a career destination.

This work will not only change student trajectories, it will directly impact patient care. Home health is often the difference between staying safe at home and being readmitted to the hospital. It is cost-effective, person-centered, and deeply aligned with Ohioans' preferences.

By supporting this initiative, you are building the future of healthcare in Ohio – one nurse, one college, one patient at a time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.