

**Testimony as Interested Party to HB 309**  
**By Jacob Dowling, Legislative Affairs Manager**  
Ohio Association of County Boards of DD  
*November 4, 2025*

Chair O'Brien, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Local Government Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Association of County Boards, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 309.

Ohio's 88 county boards of developmental disabilities support more than 116,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families throughout their lifetimes.

Services provided to people with developmental disabilities and their families are primarily funded through local property tax levies, which have been approved by voters in communities across the state. When combined with federal matching funds—which triple their impact—these local dollars provide a lifeline of support, ensuring that people born with or who develop a disability before age 22 can live happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

In Ohio, property tax dollars are essential to sustaining home- and community-based services, direct care staffing, early intervention programs, and employment supports that allow Ohioans with I/DD to live and work in their communities.

County boards share the General Assembly's commitment to transparency in how property tax dollars are authorized, collected, and spent. County board levies do not include inside millage and receive no automatic increases when property values rise. Every dollar must be explicitly approved by voters through either a term-limited or continuous levy. Once passed, the levy's rate is fixed and gradually loses value over time unless voters approve a new levy.

This means that the recent property tax increases that have drawn the rightful and understandable ire from those on fixed incomes, seniors, people with disabilities, and others of modest means have resulted in zero additional dollars for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

While we previously had testified as opponents to the 'As Introduced' version of House Bill 309, we testify today as an interested party because we are encouraged by changes made during the House committee process.

These changes include offering definitions for how the words "unnecessary" and "excessive collections" should be interpreted by local officials. Arbitrary or undefined reductions in local tax collections could destabilize the Medicaid system, threaten critical services, and harm some of Ohio's most vulnerable citizens. We are also encouraged that the current version of House Bill 309 attempts to ensure that any county budget commission decisions include meaningful input from affected people with developmental disabilities, their families, and the organizations that serve them, as well as recognizes the need to permit a level of funding, reserve balances, and cash carryover sufficient to meet county boards' statutory obligations.

To strengthen these provisions, county boards request the Senate amend House Bill 309 to ensure that no levy reduction could take place if it were to affect a county board's statutorily-required and independently-reviewed five-year expenditure and revenues projection.

Ohio is one of the few states where local property taxes fund both developmental disability services and a substantial share of the state's federal Medicaid match obligation for people with I/DD. For this reason, our mandatory five-year cost and revenue projections are vital because they help provide a clear and consistent picture of a county board's long-term financial health—especially when planning for the lifetime of services that county boards are mandated to provide.

Since county boards of DD are statutorily required to provide Medicaid match for DD waivers, any budget commission that does not take into account this obligation when rolling property tax collections could severely jeopardize services for people with developmental disabilities and their families, put the state on the hook for these costs, and risk destabilizing the Ohio's state and local funding balance.

Today, county boards provide approximately half of Ohio's Medicaid match for developmental disability services—about \$567 million in State Fiscal Year 2025, projected to rise to \$628 million in SFY 2026 and \$691 million in SFY 2027.

Given the complex balance of local, state, and federal funding that makes DD services possible in Ohio we urge this committee to recognize the unique and irreplaceable role that county boards play when considering this bill. County boards stand ready to work with legislators to improve transparency and accountability in property tax administration—without jeopardizing essential services. We continue to welcome the opportunity to collaborate on thoughtful, data-informed solutions that protect both voter intent and the continuum of care Ohioans with developmental disabilities depend on.

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