



*Celebrating 49 years*

**HORIZONS, INC.**

Meeting the Needs of Individuals with  
Developmental Disabilities

*Donna E. Merrill*  
*Executive Director*

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May 2, 2025 Senate Medicaid Committee

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members,

I want to thank you for your time today.

My name is Donna E. Merrill and I am the Executive Director of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. We are headquartered in Dover, OH.

We currently serve Tuscarawas, Harrison, Jefferson, Wayne and Coshocton Counties. Horizons has a Day Hab facility, named Avenue of Adventures, for our Individuals that live in our Bolivar ICF/I/DD Homes. We have a Youth Respite Home, in Dover, for children under 18 years old. We serve Individuals in multiple Counties, some in private homes, part time. We mainly have Group Homes with 3 or more Individuals living there with 24 hour care. We are administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Horizons team of 168 employees are proud to provide essential services to the 60 Ohio individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

First, I want to express our deep gratitude for the historic investment in disability services in the last state budget. The finding increase helped providers like us recover from a decade long crisis that led to devastating workforce shortages. Thanks to your support, we have been able to

**1.Implement quality staff training and also serve our first Remote Support Home, here in Dover**

**2.Increase wages, with our current average Direct support Professional (DSP) earning a wage of \$18.50 per hour.**

**3.Reduce overtime costs, which are necessary for coverage but are not reimbursed by Medicaid.**

I want to express my appreciation to Governor Dewine and Director Hauck for honoring commitments made.

The investment made in the last General Assembly by Using General Revenue Funds (GRF) to maintain the rate increases that were funded in part with ARPA dollars. This investment provides much needed stability for providers and the people they serve. However, the budget does not include any additional funding to further boost DSP's /Direct Support Professionals wages, despite the continued workforce crisis and rising costs. The last rate increase took effect in July of 2024, and without action from this body, providers face a nearly four year gap in rate adjustments – putting us right back in the crisis we just emerged from.

To ensure Ohioans with disabilities and their families have access to the care they need, we urge the General Assembly to:

- 1. Maintain the Governor's Investment in ICF's, Multi-System Youth and Technology First initiatives.**
- 2. Include a rate increase for waiver providers to keep up with inflation and workforce demands.**
- 3. Establish a mechanism for ongoing increases to prevent future funding crises.**

Investing in these services is not just about providers – it's about ensuring Ohioans with Disabilities receive the care and support they need to live full, independent lives in their communities. We look forward to working with you to build on the progress you've made and keep Ohio moving forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.



Donna E. Merrill  
Executive Director  
Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc  
[dmerrill@htcci.org](mailto:dmerrill@htcci.org)  
220 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Dover, OH 44622

**Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622**

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

This letter represents the **Board Members of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc**

Horizons Board of Directors have reports every other month from Horizons Executive Director, Donna Merrill. We hear of the hard work and dedication that Horizons employees give the Individuals that live in Horizons homes. We have heard about the outcome of the work Horizons Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) do on a daily basis, who provide services to Individuals that Horizons serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration; such as going to concerts, the library, parades, the County Fairs, the farmers market, and church. Donna Merrill has expressed the difficulties of keeping employees when she was unable to raise the rate of pay, in the past.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful. Since the pay increase, things have been a little easier and the pay increase was helpful. With the cost of everyday items, bills, and food costs, the pay increase was appreciated. Thank you for recognizing the importance of the work that Horizons do for Ohio individuals with Disabilities.

It is our concern, because of the talk of budgets cuts that do not include money for increases for Medicaid services. Without continued funding increases Horizons will not be supported financially. Horizons employees all work hard, especially the DSP's. Horizons Staff do yearly Trainings and participate in the community, and make a real difference for many families in the community not just the individuals that live in Horizons homes... We need to keep the good employees that we have and that Horizons Individuals depend upon. We need to continue to meet the financial needs of Horizons, it is vital to keep these services in the communities of Ohio. I ask you to

- 1. Include a rate increase for DSP's in Wavier and ICF settings.**
  - 2. Create a system to regularly adjust pay so we do not face this crisis again**
- As a Member of the Horizons Board of Directors I support the Horizons Staff Members. We need to make sure that working at Horizons is a job people can afford to do and afford to make a living at the same time, so we can continue providing quality care.**

**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Lola Lewis	<a href="mailto:lmlewis1356@gmail.com">lmlewis1356@gmail.com</a>
Chad McGlothlin	<a href="mailto:ck594@comfortkeepers.com">ck594@comfortkeepers.com</a>
Lisa Freeman Williamson	<a href="mailto:lfw@wtfweighthefacts.org">lfw@wtfweighthefacts.org</a>
Tyisha Williams	<a href="mailto:hardline123@gmail.com">hardline123@gmail.com</a>
Charlene Hunter	<a href="mailto:dmerrill@htcci.org">dmerrill@htcci.org</a>

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Nalyn Farrell and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in TASC County. I work as a **Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member**, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 8 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

Since the pay increase, things have been a little better the pay increase is helpful. With the cost of everyday items, bills, and food costs, the pay increase was appreciated. Thank you for recognizing the importance of the work that Horizons do for Ohio individuals with Disabilities.

I am concerned because of the talk of budgets that do not include money for increases for Medicaid services. Without your help representing us, we will not be supported financially. Horizons employees all work hard, especially the DSP's. We do yearly Trainings and participate in the community, and make a real difference for many families as well as the people we serve. We need to keep the good employees that we have and that Horizons Individuals depend upon.

I ask you to

1. **Include a rate increase for DSP's in Wavier and ICF settings.**
2. **Create a system to regularly adjust pay so we do not face this crisis again.**

**The people I support rely on all of Horizons Staff Members. We need to make sure that working at Horizons is a job people can afford to do and afford to make a living at the same time, so we can continue providing quality care.**

**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Nalyn Farrell

Email Address NFarrell@ntca.org

Phone 330-886-7243

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Sarah McCullough and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 14 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

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I ask you to

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**The people I support rely on all of Horizons Staff Members. We need to make sure that working at Horizons is a job people can afford to do and afford to make a living at the same time, so we can continue providing quality care.**

**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Sarah McCullough  
Email Address smccullough@htcci.org  
Phone 330-440-8419

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Hazel Bryan and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 2 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

Since the pay increase, things have been a little better the pay increase is helpful. With the cost of everyday items, bills, and food costs, the pay increase was appreciated. Thank you for recognizing the importance of the work that Horizons do for Ohio individuals with Disabilities.

I am concerned because of the talk of budgets that do not include money for increases for Medicaid services. Without your help representing us, we will not be supported financially. Horizons employees all work hard, especially the DSP's. We do yearly Trainings and participate in the community, and make a real difference for many families as well as the people we serve. We need to keep the good employees that we have and that Horizons Individuals depend upon.

I ask you to

1. **Include a rate increase for DSP's in Wavier and ICF settings.**
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**The people I support rely on all of Horizons Staff Members. We need to make sure that working at Horizons is a job people can afford to do and afford to make a living at the same time, so we can continue providing quality care.**

**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Hazel Bryan

Email Address jamato66@yahoo.com

Phone 330-795-4202

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Tina Warner and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for several years months.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

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I am concerned because of the talk of budgets that do not include money for increases for Medicaid services. Without your help representing us, we will not be supported financially. Horizons employees all work hard, especially the DSP's. We do yearly Trainings and participate in the community, and make a real difference for many families as well as the people we serve. We need to keep the good employees that we have and that Horizons Individuals depend upon.

I ask you to

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**The people I support rely on all of Horizons Staff Members. We need to make sure that working at Horizons is a job people can afford to do and afford to make a living at the same time, so we can continue providing quality care.**

**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Tina Warner  
Email Address tinahunt45@yahoo.com  
Phone 330-260-4418

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Christina Marsh and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a **Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member**, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 3.5 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

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**The people I support rely on all of Horizons Staff Members. We need to make sure that working at Horizons is a job people can afford to do and afford to make a living at the same time, so we can continue providing quality care.**

**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Christina Marsh  
Email Address cmarsh@htcci.org  
Phone 330-364-2159

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Beth Rankin and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a **Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member**, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 4 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

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**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Beth Rankin

Email Address brankin@htcci.org

Phone (330) 364-5415

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Brittany Bowles and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 1 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSP's were struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes working overtime as we were short staffed. Working so many hours left DSP's short of time with their family Also overtime rates being paid to employees is an extra cost and over time really adds up. DSP's and all staff have a lot of responsibilities every day at home and at work, which is exhausting and stressful.

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**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name Brittany Bowles  
Email Address bbowles@htcci.org  
Phone 330-600-2129

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is LISA S. BLEWIS and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in TUSCARAWAS County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 8 years.

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**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name

Email Address

Phone

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is C. Walters and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in TUSCARAWAS County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for 3 years.

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**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name C Walters  
Email Address c.walters@htcci.org  
Phone 330-364-9115

Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. located at 220 West 4<sup>th</sup> St Dover, OH 44622

Dear Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and Committee Members,

Thank you for reading this letter and your concern with Medicaid Funding

My name is Dennis Terazzi and I am an employee of Horizons of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties, Inc. I work in Tuscarawas County. I work as a Manager or Supervisor of a Horizons Home or an Office Staff Member, supporting the Individuals needs as well as Staff needs of Horizons including Horizons Direct Support Professionals ( DSP's ) who provide services to Individuals that we serve; such as personal care, transportation to work, Day Hab, or doctors' appointments, and community integration with the Individuals that Horizons serve. I have been a Horizons Employee for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

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**Thank you for your time in reading this May 13, 2025 testimony,**

Name

Email Address

Phone