



April 27,2017

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Cera and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Mark Davis and I am President of the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA). OPRA is a statewide membership of private providers who serve individuals with developmental disabilities. I appreciate this opportunity to testify today on the House substitute version of H.B. 49.

Ohio's developmental disabilities system is undergoing fundamental change. Federal and state mandates are requiring services to increasingly be delivered in smaller, community integrated settings. This can be very positive for individuals served. As with any government requirement the challenge is not so much in determining the dictate but in responding to it. In our system that is the private provider of service.

We all know of unfunded government mandates. Rare is it when government actually follows its mandates with a sincere attempt to fund them. An exception to this is the developmental disabilities budget in H.B. 49 as introduced. Our budget as introduced included a package of funding initiatives that identified gaps and challenges in our service delivery system and targeted funding in unique ways to help providers address them.

In addition to funding for new waivers for those in need the budget also added funding to serve individuals with complex needs in the community, incentivized the use of the cost-effective shared living service delivery model, added resource to the ICF system in anticipation of a new reimbursement formula, continued an add-on for vent dependent adults and put targeted monies into our most critical issue, the recruitment and retention of direct support staff.

Our challenge now is that the substitute version of H.B. 49 being discussed stripped all of these funding initiatives in their entirety from the budget. In addition, language was inserted that specifically prevents us from doing any of these things even if funding were available. This is extremely difficult for providers who are expected to implement all of the mandated changes.

OPRA is empathetic to the current economic climate and the challenge of putting together a balanced, sustainable budget in an environment of competing needs. But we do hope that you will work with us in the very short and longer term in helping us to best meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Now, I will focus my remaining comments on two issues that are crucial to providers and those we serve. First, we are in the midst of a direct care workforce crisis beyond the critical stage. Our members are experiencing direct care turnover of over 50% and are finding it increasingly impossible to meet the staffing needs of those they serve. Providers that have dedicated their very lives to this work, are for the first time turning down opportunities to serve new people. We simply cannot recruit nor retain sufficient and qualified direct support professionals (DSP's).

According to Kaiser Health News, April 26, 2017

“The U.S. [Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates](#) an additional 1.1 million workers of this kind will be needed by 2024 — a 26 percent increase over 2014. Yet, the population of potential workers who tend to fill these jobs, overwhelmingly women ages 25 to 64, will increase at a much slower rate.”

We believe the solution to this workforce crisis needs to be three-pronged.

1. Increase the wages of DSP's
2. Creative and innovative system reform that includes a shared savings component to fund DSP recruitment and retention strategies
3. Improve the DSP's experience of work to reduce turnover.

Also, we have several concerns about the proposed revisions to the provider compliance process. We recommend that the provider compliance process remains as is until a cross-stakeholder workgroup is able to recommend federally compliant, practical and sustainable reforms.

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