



Ohio House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, Chairperson Roemer

Chairperson Roemer and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My Name is Peter Moore and in this testimony I am representing the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA). It is an honor to be speaking with you today. As a statewide association OPRA represents 180 private provider organizations serving over 32,000 people with developmental disabilities with a DSP workforce of over 24,000 strong. We join our peers on this panel in support of Ohioans with developmental disabilities, their families and friends and in support of Director Jeff Davis and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities' state budget proposal. We also want to voice our support for Director Kevin Miller and the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities' proposed operating budget.

I'll start by expressing our deepest gratitude to you, Ohio's Lawmakers, for your support of long-term services and supports for Ohioans with developmental disabilities over the past several years and for allowing us the opportunity to testify today. I would also like to thank Director Davis and his team at DODD for their ongoing support. Finally, I want to thank our partners at the Ohio Association of County Boards, all of the local County Boards of Developmental Disabilities and The Arc of Ohio for their ongoing commitment to the provider community.

If I had to pick a theme for my testimony today it is Workforce, Workforce, Workforce and what do we do about it. Two years ago Ohio's state operating budget set the foundation for us to begin to seriously take on the workforce issue by increasing Homemaker Personal Care (rates) to raise the average wage for Direct Support Professionals. The previous budget also allowed us to continue to nurture the specialized services our Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) provide by letting the reimbursement rate to run as it is in statute, allowing for system growth. This was the first serious attempt to address the workforce issue in nearly two decades. In this budget we ask to continue this momentum in addressing our workforce challenges.

Unfortunately, we can already see some of the ways COVID-19 has likely permanently altered providers' ability to maintain their workforces. The COVID-19 health risks for some Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities are significantly higher than the rest of the population. With unwavering grit and determination and with the support of local and state-level partners, providers stepped up in unbelievable ways to keep the people they serve and employ healthy and safe. We are proud of the provider community. But make no mistake, the virus further highlighted the fact that at the end of the day, Ohioans with developmental disabilities need qualified and well compensated staff. The needs of the people we support and the demands of our system are evolving and Ohio's providers need your support to meet those needs and demands.

At OPRA we have 4 Guiding Principles that act as our compass when presented with challenging times like these. The first principle talks about the importance of the relationship between front-line professionals and the people we support. We must develop a workforce that values these relationships

and a system that rewards professionals for their efforts. With your past and future partnership, we believe we can build amazing and fulfilling relationships and help the people we support live full and productive lives.

We would like to work with you to include the following priorities in the fiscal years 2022 and 2023 budget:

- **Homemaker and Personal Care, Day and Vocational Services and Nonmedical Transportation Waiver Services** We are requesting two 5% increases to the rates in these three service areas over the next Biennium. These increases will provide the funds needed for DSP wages, support other front-line professionals and sustain the infrastructure needed to support the front-line workforce. One increase implemented on 1/1/22 and the second increase on 1/1/23.
- **Intermediate Care Facilities** After years of work, we were able to establish an ICF formula that has worked for providers. We would like to continue to implement that formula. We are asking for a 5% increase in the first year of the biennium and 3.5% increase in the second year. Given the challenges the global pandemic presented when it came to budgeting in 2020, we also recommend a budget amendment that would allow us to establish two paths for the ICF provider to choose so they can minimize the negative impact on their future ability to provide services.
- **Multi-System Youth** We are supportive of the investment proposed in the Governor's budget focused on serving young people who are faced with many unique challenges. We look forward to partnering with DODD on partnerships between providers, DODD and County Boards to develop Regional Respite Centers and establishing a sustainable model for in-home supports.
- **Workforce Challenges** We would like create a Task Force to address our system's workforce challenges. This Task Force will identify several initiatives and projects designed to help providers recruit and retain a qualified workforce.
- **OOD** We support the OOD budget and over the next biennium we would like to partner with OOD to explore ways we can make OOD services and funding available to more people with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for your time and attention today. We are looking forward to working with you on this budget and we want to be a resource for you as you navigate the needs of our system.

Respectfully Submitted,



Peter J. Moore  
President and CEO  
Ohio Provider Resource Association