



# INDEPENDENCE

OF PORTAGE COUNTY

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## Testimony on HB 110 House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West, and esteemed committee members,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Mindy Niehaus and I am the Social Services Coordinator of Independence of Portage County, and we are located in Portage County. We are a non-profit that provides supports for 95 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and we employ 185.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine, Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). With these budget initiatives and the leadership of Director Davis (and Director Miller), Ohioans with developmental and intellectual disabilities will continue to receive the vital services that organizations like mine provide.

We offer a multitude of opportunities to individuals from residential to employment services. We began serving youth a few years ago and this has proved to be a challenging yet rewarding experience. Youth with developmental disabilities have few residential options in Northeast Ohio. Our goal is to continue to grow the youth services we provide. In order to continue to successfully provide this service our staff would benefit from training that focuses specifically on youth with developmental disabilities. Additional funding would allow our fantastic staff to receive additional trainings as well as an increase in their wages. Staff really go above and beyond supporting individuals and deserve anything we can offer that increases their ability to provide the best services possible.

To best support these services and the Ohioans who receive and provide them, I encourage you to add the following initiatives into Ohio's biennium budget:

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to fund much needed Homemaker and Personal Care, Day and Vocational Services and Nonmedical Transportation Medicaid home and community-based waiver services rate increase. *These increases will provide much needed funds for Direct Support Professional (DSP)*

*wages, support for other front-line professionals and sustain the infrastructure necessary to provide our services.*

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to support the reimbursement formula for intermediate care facilities (ICF).
- Support a budget amendment that would allow ICFs to choose between a reimbursement rate freeze or a continuation of the formula for the first year of the biennium.
- Support the creation of 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.*
- Support the as introduced budget for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! **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.**

Mindy Niehaus  
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# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 3-1-2021

Name: Mindy Niehaus

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Independence of Portage County

Position/Title: Social Services Coordinator

Address: 575 E. Lake St.

City: Ravenna State: OH Zip: 44266

Best Contact Telephone: (330)296-2851 Email: mnlehaus@iopci.org

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes  No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB110

Specific Issue: Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Budget

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? Written Testimony Only

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I support an increase in funding for DODD's budget.

*Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.*