

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

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

First, please accept my sincerest gratitude for reviewing this testimony. It is with great respect that I am writing to you to draw attention to the field of work that I have been blessed to dedicate my career to. Working with people who have a developmental disability has been the greatest honor of my life. I began this journey as a Direct Support Professional over 30 years ago, working within the homes of people who needed my total support in order to live their lives. Direct Support Professionals are unsung heroes who are quite literally responsible for maintaining the health and well-being of our most vulnerable citizens. The work is physically, emotionally and psychologically demanding, and requires focus, compassion and dedication at a level that is truly hard to imagine; and even harder to describe with mere words. I am writing both to support DODD Director Jeff Davis and to advocate that the General Assembly build off his request and increase funding for homemaker/personal care, day services and shared living as well as increase funding for intermediate care facility programs (ICF), approve temporary changes to how the ICF reimbursement formula will run for the first year of the biennium, and for the creation of a workforce taskforce.

Direct Support Professionals are *essential* staff. Although they provide intimate and professional level services, their work is grossly undervalued. This fact is reflected in the rates being paid to Provider agencies who employ Direct Support Professionals. The most challenging struggle facing most Provider agencies today is the challenge of attracting qualified staff for a wage that is competitive only with wages being paid to retail and fast food workers. However, the retail and fast food arena can increase the cost of their product if they choose to increase wages or benefits for their employees. In the DODD system, our rates are not flexible. Medicaid determines the value of our services and assigns a rate to deliver the service. We have come to the point that the message relayed is that retail and fast food work consists of the same value as that of what is being performed by a Direct Support Professional. I do not believe this is the intent, but without making dramatic change, it is the result.

Please send a message that the work we do is valued by the Ohio Legislature. Please approve increased funding to our system so that Direct Support Professionals recognize that you value the work they do, supporting people with developmental disabilities in Ohio.

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.

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