

Jeremy Morris

Interested Party Testimony on HB 110

Senate Finance Committee

Thursday May 13, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Committee, thank you for reviewing this Interested Party Testimony on HB 110. My name is Jeremy Morris and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), a State affiliated Council that promotes independence and inclusion for individuals with significant disabilities across the State of Ohio.

As part of our work, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss legislation that impacts the community of persons with disabilities in Ohio and to be a resource to the General Assembly as they consider this budget and the impacts to individuals with disabilities across the state.

Centers for Independent Living

We appreciate the continued support in the proposed budget funding for the Centers for Independent Living (CILs). In the last two years the CILs saw reductions in state funding due to the response to COVID-19. We appreciate the funding being restored as the CILs were able to provide vital services and support to individuals over the last year. In these unprecedented times, the disability community experienced significant challenges, and the CILs service data over the last year highlights this. With the funding reductions in the last two years, and increases in demand for services, we would also appreciate any increased funding that can be provided.

New individuals requesting services	Increased 41% in 2020
Number of successful outcomes	38% increase in goals accomplished
Individuals transitioned out of institutional settings	105 Individuals now living in the community
Number of referral and community connections made	14,630

In addition to the funding for CILs, we are also encouraged by the continued funding to the overall budget for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). The agency has made great progress in their work to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment and education/training. Especially now, this will be critical in supporting the disability community as they seek to enter or re-enter the workforce. The state General Revenue Funds combined with the

Federal Match will provide the resources needed to continue the work toward individuals achieving independence through employment.

Increases for Home and Community-Based Services

Another major area of our focus is the continued work of the Ohio Home and Community-Based Services Coalition. People with disabilities and older Ohioans need access to quality and consistent services in the community. With the continued low reimbursement rates, we face shortages in the person providing care to individuals with disabilities in their home and this can lead to individuals losing independence and poor health outcomes. The modest 5% rate increase being proposed can go a long way to increase the sustainability of this vital workforce, improving access for individuals, and increasing quality of services.

In information released from the Ohio Department of Medicaid, 68% of individuals receiving long-term services and supports are living in home and community-based settings. This is a major shift from SFY 2007 when a majority were residing in long-term care facilities. As this trend continues, the funding needs to be shifted as well to ensure the resources of the State of Ohio are going toward the services and supports that Ohioans are wanting.

Reestablishing the Nursing Home bed reduction program

We also appreciate the efforts of the DeWine administration in creating the initiative to reduce the current nursing home bed capacity to reflect the actual capacity needed. As stated in the Governor's proposal, by utilizing census data from before the pandemic, it is estimated that 20% of the nursing home beds are unused. This is due in part to the desire of Ohioans to remain in their homes as opposed to being institutionalized.

Individuals are exercising their rights to live in the community instead of in institutional settings, and as the trend continues, the budget needs to reflect what Ohioans are choosing for their service and support needs. By reinstating this provision, the Senate will allow for a voluntary program to be implemented that will put Ohio on track to meet consumer demands.

We understand the difficult decisions that the Committee has to make and I appreciate your time and consideration.

I thank you for the time in reviewing this testimony,

Jeremy Morris

Executive Director