



Testimony on HB 110
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
May 13th, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony to the Committee today on HB 110.

My name is Jim Steffey and I am the CEO of Envision, and we are located in Cincinnati, serving residents of Hamilton, Butler, Clermont and Warren counties. We are a not-for-profit business that provides supports for over 600 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and we employ 185 employees. Founded in 1963 by a group of parents who wanted more for their children with disabilities, Envision continues to strive for more for people with I/DD offering in-home therapies to help children acquire skills and residential and day support options for adults. I write today to encourage the Committee to increase funding for services administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Many businesses across Ohio are facing a workforce crisis brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, but for DD-agencies like Envision, who were already facing a workforce crisis, Covid-19 has only exacerbated our staffing issues. While other businesses can increase the cost of goods to support increasing wages during a workforce crisis, agencies like Envision that rely on DODD Medicaid Waiver funding cannot. Without an increase to our current rates, we are unable to increase wages and be competitive in the job market. This leaves individuals with disabilities to suffer as shifts go unfilled and services undelivered. In the last month, we have had to turn away 15 individuals/families looking for a residential services provider and our waiting list for counseling services is over 6 months long, even though we have been actively recruiting to fill open positions. Of our 185 positions, we have 19 open positions (10%) with many of them remaining unfilled for over 2 months. Prior to Covid-19, we would have 10-12 applicants (not hires) per week for our open positions, while currently we are averaging 2 applicants per week for the last month. At this rate we are unable to keep up with turnover, let alone make gains on filling open positions.

The House's version of HB 110 makes a small investment in day services for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While any investment in these services is welcomed, I believe there is still more the General Assembly can do to ensure the sustainability and accessibility of services for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. An investment in increasing Medicaid Waiver rates means we can increase wages for our Direct Support Professionals allowing us to compete in this highly competitive job market for the employees we need to keep Ohioans with developmental disabilities safe and help them be contributing members of our community.

My staff have done amazing and heroic things since the pandemic began, but they are tired, emotionally exhausted and need help. I encourage you to add amendment SC 2290 into the HB 110 to support the following initiatives to best support my staff, my services, and the Ohioans we support:



- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities budget to fund much needed rate increases for homemaker and personal care, day, vocational and employment services, nonmedical transportation, respite services, and shared living under the three Home and Community Based Services waivers administered by DODD.
- Support the creation of a task force to address our system's workforce challenges.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Steffey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a stylized "S".

Jim Steffey, CEO
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