



Clear Skies Ahead, LLC

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Testimony on HB 110 Senate Health Committee 05/03/2021

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and esteemed Members of the Senate Health 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 Dawn Brooks and I am the operations manager of Clear Skies Ahead LLC, and we are located in Trumbull and Geauga County. We are a for profit that provides supports for almost 100 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and we employ roughly 85 people (100 pre-pandemic). We provide services that make it possible for our clients to live in and be a part of their community. I write today to encourage the Committee to increasing funding for services administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Prior to the pandemic we did not have to spend money to get new hires. We were able to post on public free locations and increase our employee pool. Since the pandemic we have been spending more and more on recruitment and have still been unsuccessful. We have added referral and sign on bonuses, we have posted paid ads anywhere we can find. We just hosted an all-day drive-thru hiring event in both Trumbull and Geauga county. Not a single person even showed up.

We were a quickly growing company prior to the pandemic. Hiring was always the slowest part of our growth. We often had to wait to work with new clients while new employees were hired and trained. Now hiring has almost stopped. We are not even keeping up with our relatively small turnover. We just do not have the ability to take on new clients, and last week we had to serve termination notices to several clients we currently work with.

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. I hope that I never have to terminate services with someone again because we do not have staff. It made me feel guilt, shame, and embarrassment in a way that is hard to describe. Enough that I felt like I had to write this testimony. Investments could help make sure that does not need to happen.

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 the following initiatives into Ohio's biennium budget 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



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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.

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to support the reimbursement formula for intermediate care facilities (ICF).
 - Allow a temporary change in statute to alter the ICF reimbursement rate calculations for the first year of the biennium.
- 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.**

Dawn Brooks

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