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Renaissance house, inc.

Executive Director
Robert G. Weinhardt

**Testimony on HB 110
Senate Health Committee
May 3, 2021**

Trustees

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Mary Jane Hahler
Cable A. Steinemann
Susan L. Smith

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 Robert Weinhardt, I am the Executive Director of Renaissance House, Inc. We are located in Erie, Huron, Seneca, Sandusky and Hancock Counties. We are a not-for-profit organization that provides supports for 87 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and we employ 110 people.

Renaissance House, Inc. has a 41-year history of providing services to assist individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities to live in their own homes. I write today to encourage the Committee to increase funding for services administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

The backbone of our agency's ability to provide services is our workforce of dedicated Direct Support Professionals. During the pandemic we lost over ten percent of our already strained workforce of DSP's due to fears of COVID infection due to underlying health conditions. The service we provide cannot shut down. The majority of the people we serve cannot be left alone. The schedule needs to be covered. Our DSP's are working 60-100 hours a week and our managers are doing direct service to compensate for staffing shortages. Our efforts to recruit new employees to meet this need have gone unanswered. The rate of pay is low due to reimbursement rates set at the state level based on Medicaid match funding provided by the State Legislature. The people that do apply do not qualify due to poor work histories, disqualifying criminal records or other undesirable traits that do not meet the high standards that we require for compassionate caregiving.

The workforce crisis that we are experiencing has had a negative impact on our ability to deliver services. In the past two years the number of people we serve has been reduced from 98 to 87 due to terminating services and attrition. For example, when someone we serve passes away we are not able to replace that person due to staff being reallocated to current individuals needing coverage

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.

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 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.

Thank you,



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