May 23, 2019

**Ohio Senate**

**Finance Committee**

Chairperson Dolan and Esteemed Senate Finance Committee Members,

I am Roy Cherry and writing to provide testimony on behalf of The Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio where I serve as the CEO. At The Epilepsy Center we provide a wide range of services to people with developmental disabilities, including residential care, adult day services, employment services, vocational, transportation and payee services. We serve over 50 individuals with developmental disabilities in Lucas and Wood County. The services provided to them are done by our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), who are the very foundation of this industry. We employee approximately 100 employees of which 80 are direct support professionals. Our agency is currently partnering with local non-profits including the Toledo Metro Parks to create more opportunities for our clients with developmental disabilities. It is our mission to improve the lives of people affected by epilepsy and those with developmental disabilities.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Governor DeWine, Director Davis, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Ohio House of Representatives who, separately and collectively, have made an unprecedented investment in services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am appreciative of the administration and the Ohio House’s proposal to invest in the homemaker/personal care service to help increase the average wage of DSPs providing that service. We ask so much of them but are so limited in the funds that we can pay them. They pass medications, do g-tube feeding and basically are responsible for full and total care of individuals with developmental disabilities. The very lives of people we serve are in their hands. This increase in the average wage we can pay the DSPs would be such a tremendous help. Many DSPs work multiple jobs just to make ends meet, but still are so committed to the individuals with developmental disabilities, despite the low current wage. This action to increase the average DSP rate would enhance the profession, allow for even more motivated DSPs caring for the individuals and strengthen retention of good employees. As an agency committed to providing services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the investment helps ensure my agency can continue to provide our array of services.

The developmental disabilities services field is in agreement on the direction and actions to be taken to increase our support and positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their valued DSPs. On behalf of my agency, my staff, and the individuals we support, I encourage you, Senator Dolan and Members of this Committee, to support the proposed budget provisions relevant to the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Together we will succeed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roy J Cherry, CMA

CEO

The Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio