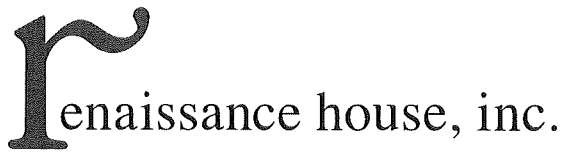


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Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget

House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Robert Weinhardt and I am the Executive Director of Renaissance House, Inc. We are located in Erie, Huron, Seneca, Sandusky and Hancock Counties. We are an organization that provides residential services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 100 employees are proud to provide essential services to 70 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which the people we serve, and their families rely.

Today we find ourselves in a major staffing crisis. It has become extremely difficult or impossible to recruit and retain essential direct support staff (DSP's). Our current rate of pay for DSP's, as a result of low reimbursement rates, is not competitive in today's workforce environment. Our current workforce of dedicated DSP's are working 60-100 hours and managers are covering shifts to compensate for staffing shortages for the people we serve and we have had to turn away others seeking service.

The individuals we serve and their families depend on us to maintain a sufficient work force. Our DSP's provide essential services to help with many aspects of daily living including providing intimate personal care, medication administration and other care to insure their health and safety.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Renaissance House, Inc. We encourage this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

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,


Robert Weinhardt

Executive Director *Endeavoring to create and safeguard valued social roles for people*

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