



koinonia

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and esteemed committee members,

My name is Wm. Kiley Ritt and I am the Behavioral Supports Manager of Koinonia Homes, and we are located in Independence, Ohio. We are an organization that provides intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, residential, day, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program as well as behavioral health services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) as well as employment and vocational training through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Our team of (number of agency employees) employees are proud to provide essential services to (number of people served) Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). 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. The budget proposed in HB 33 is a good foundation to help our system combat these many changes.

I have been serving those with developmental and intellectual disabilities for a decade as a psychotherapist, direct care staff member and a manager. This is a long time for me but a small fraction of time when compared with my employer agency that has been serving since 1974. Koinonia is located in Independence, Ohio and serves people around the clock in employment and residential settings. Our goal is to help people live lives of opportunity, health, and enjoyment.

Those who work in this industry do so because they feel compelled, compelled to help those who need it so that they can live wonderful lives. As a therapist, I have seen the changes firsthand to the care that can be offered across the state. When working for my local county board of developmental disabilities I saw how challenging it became to find any workers to come and provide the care that helps people live. This is not an optional service for many individuals with disabilities, this is a matter of safety and health.

The individuals we serve used to be directly involved within their own communities, attending workshops, going on outings, and being contributing members of society with the help of their staff. Due to staffing concerns, many of these outings no longer happen because of the lack of staffing required to support them. Instead, individuals remain in their homes with limited staffing and lack of opportunity. This is having a direct impact on their mental health, ability to thrive and their life satisfaction.

Creating Opportunities, Enriching Lives

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The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck and Miller, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Koinonia. With these budget initiatives, Ohioans with disabilities will continue to receive the vital employment services organizations like mine provide. We encourage this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars through budget amendment HC0656 into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20 an hour.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them!

Thank you for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you today.

William Kiley Ritt

Wm. Kiley Ritt

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