



koinonia

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget House Finance Committee

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

My name is Andrew Schultz, and I am the Admissions Coordinator for Koinonia Homes, and we are located in Cuyahoga County, serving several counties in Northeast Ohio. We are an organization that provides Intermediate Care Facilities, Waiver Funded Programming, Adult Day Service, Vocational Habilitation, and other 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 over 400 employees is proud to provide essential services to over 350 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). While the proposed budget is groundbreaking and welcomed, we ask that an increase in allocations be made in order to secure professional staffing and support services. As the admissions coordinator for Koinonia, I have reviewed several potential new admissions from the community that unfortunately cannot be served because of staffing shortages. For the individuals we do serve, their staff is often overworked and burnout remains a risk for some of the best workers we have. We cannot staff for new intakes, and therefore we are forced to turn individuals and families in need away, without the help we would like to offer. We need actionable steps to be taken to help ensure that the workforce in our field can take care of the individuals we serve, as well as their own families. Serving as a direct support professional takes a unique kind of person, and it is a shame that some retailers are able to pay more to their new employees than organizations like Koinonia are able to offer.

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.

Andrew Schultz

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Creating Opportunities, Enriching Lives

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