



koinonia

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

My name is Gena Hart and I am the Organizational Learning Coordinator of Koinonia Homes, and we are located in Independence, Ohio (Cuyahoga County). We are an organization that provides (list the broad categories services you provide as applicable- intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or residential, day, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program) 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.

As a training and development coordinator and caregiver for people with developmental disabilities, this crisis has affected my efforts to retain current support professionals as well as recruit new candidates. Our Direct Support Professionals suffer greatly from low wages caused by current reimbursement rates. As an IDD professional for over 17 years, I have seen how this directly impacts my former and current colleagues who provide direct care services and receive extremely low wages.

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 ODD if you provide OOD services) 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.

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Creating Opportunities, Enriching Lives

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