



koinonia

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget House Finance Committee

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and esteemed committee members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is James Frankino, and I am the Director of ICF of Koinonia Homes Inc. and we are located primarily in Cuyahoga County. We are an organization that provides 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). Our team of 450 employees are proud to provide essential services to 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.

There has been a direct impact to the individuals we care for because of staffing concerns. This included the closure of one of our locations in 2021, as well as barriers in community engagement opportunities and the attendance of day programming. To say we are in a staffing crisis would be an understatement at this point, but it still is an issue that needs acknowledgement.

I am thankful for Governor DeWine's significant investment in his proposed budget for the IDD system. The proposed amount is not enough. Unfortunately, our funding has not remained congruent with the rising cost of care and inflation which has led us to this crisis. We are not able to remain competitive in wages for those who care for this much-underserved population. Being one of the largest non-profits in the area we receive an abundance of referrals for placement and sadly have to decline due to staffing. This proposes yet another barrier for services by those in need. My concern is that if we continue down this path, we will unfortunately have to close more than one location and displace the individuals that depend on us.

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 Homes Inc. 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.

Thank You,

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