



# 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 Lisanne Bright, RN and I am the Director of Healthcare Services at Koinonia Homes, Inc. We are located in NE Ohio serving individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in Cuyahoga, Summit, Mahoning and Columbia Counties. We are an organization who provides services to individuals in our intermediate care facilities (ICF-IDD), waiver program and Day Program. Additionally, we provide drop-in services, behavioral health services, employment, and vocational services. All services are licensed, certified or accredited through CARF. We receive payment through the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 450 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 350 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I support both 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 essential workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide the critical support on which the people we serve and their families rely. The budget proposed in HB 33 is a solid foundation from which to begin. The DSP role requires hours of training both at the start of employment and continues throughout the year. Staff turnover is high- as much as 50% annually and requires continual efforts to maintain the appropriate staffing levels needed to support the individuals we serve. We have found that low wages are a primary cause for turnover subsequently affecting the ability to provide consistent, stable services to a vulnerable population of Ohioans.

The current Medicaid reimbursement rates puts limits on the ability to:

- Provide a living wage for our support staff who provide the majority of care to our individuals.
- Provide educational programs to enhance scope, understanding and practice in the IDD field.
- To attract qualified, knowledgeable support staff that can impact individuals' lives in a positive manner, contributing to improved quality of life.

It is essential to be able to provide stable services to the individuals we serve, meet our Mission to serve and provide services that exceed expectations of our individuals and their families.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck and Miller, provides opportunity to rebuild and maintain the services expected for our clientele. It is my hope that with the budget initiatives, Ohioans with IDD will receive the vital employment services needed. We encourage this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for both DODD and ODD and invest additional dollars through budget amendment HC0656 for these vital services in an effort to raise direct support professional wages to an average of \$20 an hour.

## Creating Opportunities, Enriching Lives

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

Thank you for the opportunity to bring my concerns before you today,

Lisanne Bright, RN, PhD Candidate

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