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**Proponent Testimony on HB33**  
**House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services**  
**Katie Hunt Thomas, The Ability Center of Greater Toledo**

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for reviewing this testimony on HB33. My name is Katie Hunt Thomas and I am the Director of Advocacy for The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, a Center for Independent Living (CIL) serving seven counties in northwest Ohio. We are part of a network of 12 CILs with varying service areas in every region of Ohio.

I am submitting this testimony to discuss the potential impact of the request for increased funding for the Centers for Independent Living.

Centers for Independent Living are non-profit organizations run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. We seek to ensure that people with disabilities have the supports that they need to live meaningful, independent lives within their communities. The Ability Center's mission is to make our community the most disability friendly in the nation by increasing independence for people with disabilities, discovering true passions, and changing the community's perception of disability.

The Ability Center of Greater Toledo has served our seven counties in northwest Ohio for over one hundred years. We train mobility assistance dogs and skilled companion dogs; maintain a technology lending closet; sanitize and gift used durable medical equipment; provide home modifications like ramps and lifts; provide advocacy services and information & referral; create inclusive recreation opportunities; and work with youth with disabilities to assist them in pursuing their dreams. We are also a strong partner for organizations that want to be more disability-friendly.

The funding most CILs receive is only enough to operate small shops with limited staff and reach. Despite that, because we are truly motivated to fulfill our mission, the CIL network in Ohio has a huge reach. In one example, over the last two years, Ohio CILs have transitioned over 200 individuals living in nursing homes into their own homes, creating a cost-savings of over \$10,400,000 for the state of Ohio. In general, because of our status as CILs, people with disabilities in Ohio trust us and come to us for assistance. We know how to reach many people that can be difficult to reach, and we know that with more funding, we can do more.

We are asking for \$1,500,000 per year total in the line item 415-511. \$1,200,000 will go toward the critically needed services offered by Centers for Independent Living including home modifications, advocacy, information & referral, peer support, and youth and nursing home transition.

The remaining funding will go toward expanding services statewide. While CILs are in every region of the state, not every Ohio county is currently in a CIL service area. With the additional funding, The Ability Center will expand our services south to Hancock and Allen Counties and west to Sandusky County.

This funding will be vital to the services we offer in our region, and we appreciate your support.