



ECHOING HILLS

REVOLUTIONIZING LIVES WHERE PEOPLE LIVE, LEARN, CONNECT,
PLAY, AND WORSHIP.

March 10, 2023

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget

House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Camilia Adams and I am one of the Home Managers of Echoing Hills, and we are located in Lorain County. We are a nonprofit organization that places value on each individual by providing opportunities for inclusion, self-advocacy, and community integration. As a Christian organization we proclaim that all are "...fearfully and wonderfully made" by our creator and were created with purpose and potential. Our team of employees are proud to provide essential services to Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The services we provide depend on medicaid funding, administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD).

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 affect the people we serve and their families rely.

As a manager, it is my responsibility to ensure the home is properly staffed to meet the needs of the individuals. Every person is unique and some physical and mental challenges require more supervision and hands on care such as bathing, feedings, and medical attention. For several years we have endured a high turnover rate of staff due to lower wages. When there is a shortage of staff it puts more stress on all departments, leading to burn out and fatigue.

I have been with Echoing Hills for 22 years, 18 as a Direct Support Professional and 4 as a Home Manager. Due to the lower wages allotted by the budget, I had to work an extra part time job to meet the needs of my family for many years. The reason I chose to stay with Echoing Hills all this time is because I respect and appreciate the vision of this ministry. The ethics, the professionalism, and the value placed on staff involvement motivates myself and others to pursue excellence in everything we do to support the individuals we serve.

It brings so much joy to share in the life experiences of those we care for as they pursue their goals and dreams of becoming more independent. At our Oberlin location we take pride and focus on community integration. When we have secured enough staff it has given us the opportunity to provide transportation and supervision during community employment, neighborhood volunteering, and local events. Families and friends of their loved ones continue to express gratitude and appreciation for the quality of services we provide. The smiles on each face and stories shared are the greatest treasure.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Echoing Hills. **We encourage this subcommittee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.**

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! **Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.**

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