



ECHOING HILLS

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 Erika Sterling and I am a day program coordinator for Echoing Hills. We are located in Coshocton county in Warsaw, Ohio. Our organization provides services for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities across the state of Ohio. This includes intermediate care facilities for individuals with an intellectual disability, residential services, employment services, adult day services, and community-based waiver services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities.

I am in strong support of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. Low reimbursement rates are threatening our ability to hire and retain DSPs. The support provided by our organization is critical for individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as their families. Many people whom we support are unable to fully care for themselves on a daily basis. The lack of reliable DSPs can be detrimental and threaten lives of many who rely on organizations like ours.

The Governor's and Director Hauck's proposed budget initiative is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Echoing Hills. I strongly encourage this subcommittee to approve Governor DeWine's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise DSP wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This would 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 Ohioans that so greatly need them! Thank you again for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you.

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