

MiSpace, Inc.

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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 those involved who are acknowledging my written testimony today.

My name is Shannon Kinsella, and I am currently the Operations Manager of MiSpace, Inc. located in Westerville, Ohio. We serve a number of individuals who have developmental disabilities with direct care related services in Franklin County. We have roughly thirty Direct Support Professionals and twenty individuals who they assist in an ongoing capacity.

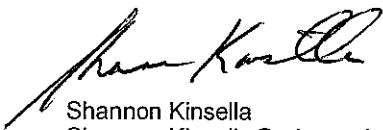
I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including Direct Support Professionals (DSP) to provide essential tasks, threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which our the people we serve and their families rely.

The landscape of finding quality Direct Support Professionals has drastically changed in the past few years. It was only a few years ago that I recall holding orientations for several staff weekly and now agencies (including ours) are fortunate to even hire one person a month. Due to current rates and reimbursement limitations, inadequate pay is often cited as a reason that this profession is passed in favor of others. We currently live in a society that deep frying fast food provides a more livable wage than one which ensures some of society's most at risk and overlooked individuals receive even adequate standards of care. I find this sobering and am dismayed by what will occur if this situation is not remedied as quickly as possible. Our work force currently consists of Direct Support Professions who work at times in excess of sixty to eighty hours a week as well as an administrative team who handles direct care related duties. The hours for our workforce are borne out of the necessity to provide for our client base.

Individuals and families depend greatly on these supports. For some it allows the opportunity to live as independent-ly as possibly in their own community, for others it allows families to stay together and have proper foundations in place so that their loved ones are not separated from them out of necessity. Many individuals had the ability to explore their independence for the first time ever, and now due to a staffing crisis may be requested to return to living situations that they did not want to be part of due to not having the care that is essential to continued success in all areas of life. Families can balance having employment and managing their lives while still ensuring their loved ones remain with them if they choose by having Direct Support Professionals come directly into their home to address health and safety needs. Most people are not fortunate enough to have a wealth of unpaid or natural supports available to them and as such the Direct Support Professional is responsible to bridge these divides.

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 MiSpace, Inc.. 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 for the individuals of the State of Ohio who have developmental disabilities.

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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