



**THE EPILEPSY CENTER
OF NORTHWEST OHIO**

*Serving People with Seizure Disorders
and
Those with Developmental Disabilities*

1701 Holland Road • Maumee, Ohio 43537-1646
phone 419.867.5950 • *toll free* 800.589.5958 • *fax* 419.867.5954
e-mail info@epilepsycenter.org
website www.epilepsycenter.org

**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 Roy Cherry and I am the CEO of The Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio, and we are located in Maumee Ohio and provide services in Lucas and Wood County. We are an organization that provides various services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These services include residential care in their homes, day programs, vocational services teaching them work skills, and transportation. In addition, we are the representative payee for over 400 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. All of these services are administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 120 employees are proud to provide essential services to the 60 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities residentially, 55 in day programs and the over 400 we provide rep payee services for.

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 our people we serve and their families rely.

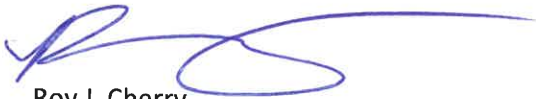
Because of the low reimbursement for our services it becomes difficult to attract and keep good employees to provide these services. Many times, our DSPs don't last 6 months in pursuit of higher paying jobs. With the number of open shifts that we have open every week, it cost us extra dollars to incentivize staff to pick up these shifts due to the shortage. This has cost the agency several thousands of dollars. In addition, due to the high turnover, we are continuously recruiting and hiring. This takes up an enormous amount of time and cost. The DSPs are critical to providing the highest quality of life for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the fact that providers cannot pay them what they truly deserve is tragic.



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 The Epilepsy Center of Northwest Ohio. **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.**

Sincerely,



Roy J. Cherry

CEO

rcherry@epilepsycenter.org

419.867.5950

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