



THE SOCIETY FOR HANDICAPPED CITIZENS
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**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee**

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**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 Melanie Kasten-Krause and I am the Executive Director of The Society for Handicapped Citizens of Medina County d.b.a. The Society, and we are headquartered in Medina County serving Ashland, Huron, Medina and Wayne counties. We are an organization that provides intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and residential, day, and transportation services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 140 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 300 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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 the people we serve and their families rely. Agencies like ours have had to make difficult decisions due to the staffing crisis. The Society has had to cut services to over 20 people in the past 2 years. We are just not able to attract and retain staff at the wage we are currently able to pay.

The services that we provide are vital to the individuals that we support as well as to their families. Parents count on our services for their children when they, the parents, are no longer able to be the caregiver. Individuals gain skills and have opportunities to live full lives through our programs.

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 Society. 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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**The Society is honored to be celebrating our 70th year in service,
which would not be possible without supporters like you!**

