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**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee
Submitted March 13, 2023**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

My name is Brian Thomas and I am the President/CEO of United Disability Services (UDS). We operate two physical locations in Akron (Summit County) and we serve individuals who reside in adjoining counties as well. UDS provides prevocational habilitation, adult day habilitation, homemaker/personal care and transportation services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our 116 employees skillfully and proudly provide essential services to more than 400 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

UDS is very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The changing labor landscape and the accompanying shortage of direct support professionals (DSPs) threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which the people we serve and their families rely.

You, our elected officials, allocate the funding for this system of human services, and you also approve the rates that are established for the services we provide. I respectfully ask that you recognize that that **allocations that go toward service provision for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities are far from adequate to cover the services, as those rates are very rarely adjusted, and never in a manner that keeps up with rising costs.**

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, is a positive step toward stabilizing the services provided by UDS. We encourage this subcommittee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD **and to invest additional dollars** into these vital services in order to raise DSP 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! Again, thank you 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,

Brian W. Thomas