

Testimony on HB 33
Senate Finance Committee

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and esteemed committee members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

I am Derrick Bruggeman and I work for Koinonia Homes in Cleveland, OH. I have been working with individuals with Developmental Disabilities for over 12 years now.

Throughout my career there are two main reasons we have struggled with retaining employees; employee wages, and employees becoming burnt out from not having work life balance, due to them not being able to live off the current wage they make. Most of the struggles have come around not having enough employees to cover shifts. This can cause many issues such as: not having enough staff for a shift, being able to provide the best service we can for the individuals we serve, and employees becoming burnt out from working too many hours. One of the homes I manage didn't have a supervisor for over 2 years because we could not find anyone that wanted to work at the home for the wage we are able to pay with the current Medicaid reimbursement rate. It is an ongoing struggle to find staffing for the multiple homes. Another one of the homes I manage has not had full staff since before the pandemic, there are always open shifts at this home and recently this has really affected the individuals who live there. Due to the staffing crisis our individuals have seen less community outings and less 1 on 1 time with the employees they depend on. HB 33 will help our individuals have a better quality of life as we as an agency can provide a competitive wage for the employees that choose to work in this field.

An individual that lives in one of the homes I manage has been deeply impacted by the shortage of staffing. He cannot go to a workshop because most workshops either do not have the staffing or they cannot provide the proper care for him. It has also affected him because he is home the majority of the time and since we have struggled with finding staff for this home he does not get to go out in the community as often as he used to. He really enjoys going out to eat at Burger King, Taco Bell, any Pizza restaurant, and to a Dollar General to buy candy. With this individual staying home every day, we are starting to see more and more behavior issues with him and it is a growing concern amongst his guardian and the people who are closest with him. I believe with better wages for our employees we can be more competitive and hire good employees who are passionate and want to provide the best life for the clients we serve.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The budget initiatives for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, will reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Koinonia. We encourage this committee to further invest additional funds on top of the House-passed budget for DODD.

We're confident this investment will enable us to reduce turnover, increase retention, and reduce hours dedicated to training and recruitment. It cannot be overstated how impactful continuity of care is for the individuals we serve. Institutional knowledge can only be built through a stable and revitalized workforce. We currently have open beds across our organization due to our staffing crisis as we cannot meet the safe staffing ratios required by the state. Increasing the direct support professional wages will ensure we provide optimal care to our individuals and be a stable resource to the communities we serve, and the county board.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring my concerns on HB 33 before you today.

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