



**Senate Finance Committee
House Bill 33 Interested Party Testimony
May 25, 2023**

**Robert Heinzerling
Executive Director
Heinzerling Community**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Bob Heinzerling, and I am the Executive Director of Heinzerling Community, an Intermediate Care Facility or ICF. We have proudly served Central Ohio's most medically fragile and disabled citizens since 1959. Our campus and facilities are located on the west side of Columbus, and we are the only developmental disability organization in Franklin County that provides around the clock residential services exclusively for this population. Today, approximately 350 dedicated staff members work together to provide a loving home environment and intensive care to 159 children and adults with severe or profound developmental disabilities.

The work our staff performs on a normal day is extremely challenging, which only became more difficult during the pandemic. Like many ICFs, Heinzerling Community faced challenges filling open positions before the pandemic, and these staffing difficulties were exacerbated by the onset of COVID-19 and have not improved. **We are currently at our most critical staffing point in the organizations over sixty (60) year history.** Hiring staff at all levels of our organization remains a significant challenge.

As a result of our extraordinary staffing issues, we have not been able to admit new residents since before the pandemic (barring a couple of emergency situations) because we simply do not have the human capacity to take care of any more residents. **In fact, we have over forty (40) individuals on our waitlist, which is by far the longest waitlist we've ever experienced in Heinzerling's history. Unfortunately, our considerable waitlist is despite having available beds, as we are only at 78% bed capacity. We just do not have the workforce to care for additional DD residents in need.**

We have made every effort to address our staffing needs through common sense, market-based approaches including, but not limited to, adding an additional recruiter to our staff, incentive pay to encourage current staff to pick-up extra shifts, adopting a Hero Pay program which provides a bonus to all staff each pay period based on the number of hours worked, expanding advertising, etc.

Regardless of our extensive efforts, the number of employment applications we are receiving is dwindling, and the turnover in our existing staff is the highest it has ever been. We are unable to compete with employers who are able to pay a higher wage. And unlike other employers trying to attract workers, we cannot increase our "cost of services" because 100% of our residents are on Medicaid. Often times we find employees who are excellent caregivers and genuinely want to work with the residents at Heinzerling but can't afford to turn down a higher paying job someplace

else. With the rising costs of food and living expenses, employees who want to do this incredibly challenging and rewarding work simply cannot afford to take the job.

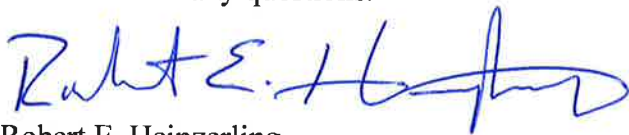
Moreover, we are directly competing for workforce with the state of Ohio-owned developmental centers, one of which is located only a couple of miles from Heinzerling. We often lose out on qualified workers because the state-owned center pays approximately \$20 per hour, while our average hourly rate is \$16.50.

We are extremely grateful for the Legislature's previous support for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and Ohio's provider community. The funding and support over the last two state budget cycles and throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic helped us to provide increased pay and bonuses to retain staff in order to keep operational. But as I stated, we are still experiencing a harrowing workforce crisis and are in great need of an increase for ICF/IIED direct service providers.

There is one other budget issue in a current amendment that I would like to bring to your attention:

- Increase to the "add on" for ventilator-dependent residents.
 - a. Heinzerling currently has 15 ventilator-dependent residents. This requires a 24/7 respiratory therapist on staff, amongst other very specific requirements such as an RN on duty at all times and increased staffing ratio. While nursing homes receive a \$1,200 per day "add on" for such care, ICF's currently receive \$300. As we understand it, the budget already includes funding to increase ICF's to \$1,200 for parity with the nursing homes and we respectfully urge your support to retain that funding. This money goes to support the most vulnerable Ohioans and is critical for us to continue as a vent-certified facility.

Thank you for your consideration of these incredibly important issues. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.



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