**Ohio’s “DD” Budget: Our Shared Victory**

Several weeks ago, I sent you an update on the status of critical “developmental disabilities” components in the just-approved Senate version of House Bill 59, Ohio’s budget bill. Today, the legislative budget process has concluded. In short, we won.

I am pleased to report that each of the items of high importance to OPRA members and stakeholders that our staff and members were fighting for remained intact in the budget bill’s final language. Those include:

* $5.4 million in additional funding in FY14 and $10.9 million in FY 15 for waiver provider rate increases in the Individual Option waiver reimbursement system. Coupled with a projected $5.4 million from DODD this would total $16.2 million in FY 15 – the first ever increase since the system’s inception in 2005.
* Authorization of the Directors of Medicaid and Developmental Disabilities to establish a “health home” system that may provide coordinated care for people with chronic health conditions and developmental disabilities.
* Removal of provisions that would have created a DSP (direct support professional) certification program. New language calls for establishment of a work group to review and recommend potential policy changes in the area of core competencies for direct care workers to the legislature, by December 31st.
* Revisions, based on an OPRA-led compromise, in the provisions that govern reform for intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICF/IID). These include elimination of the rollback in FY 15, elimination of the proposed flat rate for RAC-4, mitigation of DODD’s IAF scores in the re-basing project, retention of the ICF reimbursement formulary in statute, targets for downsizing larger ICFs to smaller ones, and conversion of ICFs to waivers.

I do not believe in self-aggrandizement. However, I also see no harm in being honest. OPRA was the only “DD” advocate to play an active role in securing all four of the above provisions in the budget bill. Efforts by staff and members were directly responsible for the waiver and health home provisions. And OPRA ~~played~~ provided a strong leadership role on the other two. We should be proud, collectively, of these achievements.

Our work is not finished. On a separate note we remain disappointed the General Assembly has not yet acted on Medicaid reform, leaving employers to face daunting, even disastrous, increases in health care costs and further stranding 275,000 Ohioans without health care insurance. Many of these Ohioans are our own direct care workers. The situation remains a “work in progress,” and we will not stop working to achieve lasting reform.