



OPRA Board of Director Election Ballot

District 5

**Serving Ashland, Columbiana, Mahoning, Medina, Portage,
Stark, Summit, Trumbull and Wayne Counties**

In accordance with OPRA's Code of Regulations, votes are being requested from current OPRA Members for OPRA **District 5**. This representative will fill a three-year term beginning **January 1, 2025 and ending December 31, 2027**. Any/all nominees are listed below. The individual selected will have all the rights and responsibilities of an OPRA District Director as outlined in the Code of Regulations and will address the issues of OPRA Provider Members.

Only one (1) Director is to be elected. Please vote for only one (1) candidate.

Michelle Madden, Chief Executive Officer
Independence of Portage County, Inc.

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Jo Spargo, Executive Director
REM Ohio, Inc.

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Kristine Willhite, Chief Executive Officer
Siffrin, Inc.

☐

**Ballots must be returned by postal mail or in-person
by Friday, October 25, 2024 to:**

Sonya Summers, Member Communications Manager
Ohio Provider Resource Association
1152 Goodale Blvd.
Columbus, OH 43212
ssummers@opra.org
(614) 224-6772

Signature of Individual Voting

Organization

Date

Meet Your District 5 Candidates

(All candidates are listed in alphabetical order by last name)



Michelle L. Madden – CEO, Independence of Portage County, Inc.

Michelle L. Madden is a result-driven executive with over 25 years of progressive experience in Human Resources and the Non-Profit Sector. She demonstrates exceptional leadership, problem-solving abilities in complex situations, and adaptability to major management changes. Michelle is praised for her active listening skills and providing valuable input from new perspectives.

Michelle is known for her fairness, honesty, politeness, and kindness. She does not shy away from delivering harsh truths or making difficult choices when necessary. Equally, she motivates and empowers her team, always making time to work directly with anyone who seeks her out. Michelle is a wealth of knowledge and experience, driven to develop, implement, and manage the plans she creates, including the team in every step of the process. Over the past several years, Michelle has been deeply involved in advancing the goals of the IDD Community supporting and enhancing community-based service providers for people with developmental disabilities in Ohio.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Independence of Portage County (IOPCI), Michelle has demonstrated exceptional leadership and problem-solving skills, spearheading operational excellence initiatives and securing increased funding for developmental disabilities services in the 2024/2025 state budget. Her commitment to fostering employee growth and well-being, along with cultivating a culture of collaboration and innovation, has driven engagement and retention within the organization.

Michelle is a visionary and big-picture thinker who has been at the forefront of integrating innovative technology into the care of the individuals served by IOPCI. This approach has not only improved the quality of care but also revolutionized the mindset on how services are delivered. By embracing new technologies, IOPCI has been able to provide more personalized, efficient, and effective support to the community.

Michelle adeptly manages relationships with key stakeholders, enhancing trust and reputation within the industry. Her dedication to driving positive change is evident in her strong leadership, innovative mindset, and informed decision-making. She believes her experience and perspective can continue to be invaluable in shaping the future of OPRA, and she is excited about the opportunity to serve another term, contributing to the ongoing success and growth of the community and its services.

Michelle began her career in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) field in 2005 when her mentor, Anna Barrett, hired her as IOPCI's Human Resources Director. This role ignited her passion for improving the lives of those she considers peers and friends. In 2018, Michelle and her predecessor, Bill Ullman, restructured the entire organizational framework at IOPCI, eliminating the adversarial "Us Vs. Them" culture. Promoted to Chief Operations Officer (COO), Michelle's leadership led to sweeping changes, and despite losing 75% of the management team within 60 days, she provided unwavering support to keep the agency running smoothly.

In recognition of her dedication, Michelle was promoted to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Independence of Portage County earlier this year. The Board of Directors praised her enthusiasm and commitment to fostering a positive organizational culture.

Throughout her tenure, Michelle has been actively involved with OPRA, serving on the HR Committee and various subcommittees for over 15 years. She has contributed to the development of the HR Toolkit series, presented at the Bi-Annual OPRA Conference, and currently serves on the Workforce Crisis Taskforce. She currently serves on OPRA executive board as the Secretary.

Michelle generates ideas constantly and has the drive to put them into action. She motivates and encourages her team to achieve remarkable results, working alongside them to get things done. Her dedication to seeing people succeed and

reach their full potential is unwavering.

I am excited to express my interest in continuing my seat as a District 5 Board Member. Committed to the OPRA Mission, I am passionate about contributing my time and expertise to shape OPRA's direction and future initiatives.

As the CEO of Independence of Portage County, I have led operational excellence initiatives, secured increased funding, and driven employee engagement. My visionary and innovative approach has integrated cutting-edge technology into our care practices, revolutionizing how we deliver services.

I am dedicated to fostering collaboration, enhancing stakeholder relationships, and driving positive change within our industry. I believe my experience and perspective will continue to be invaluable to OPRA's growth and success.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to the opportunity to continue serving and making a positive impact.



Jo Spargo – Executive Director, REM Ohio

Jo has been involved in OPRA for her entire career in the DD field. She has served on OPRA committees throughout those years in all areas as her responsibilities evolved and the needs of OPRA changed. She has regularly attended monthly OPRA meetings and OPRA conferences and is currently an active member of the Policy committee. As a representative of OPRA, Jo has regularly been chosen to serve on various DODD workgroups, such as the Host Home work group, the Waiver Work group and the Certification Rule Work Group.

As the mother of a son with special needs, Jo is a tireless advocate for people with DD. She served on Ohio's DD Council by Governor's appointment for seven years from 2003 - 2020. While serving on this council she was the Council Chair, Council vice Chair, and Public Policy Chair. Jo attended annual legislative advocacy events in Washington DC, meeting with legislators or their aids to advocate for issues important to the DD community. In addition, MS Spargo serves as an OHCA IDD board member, and has for over 5 years.

As Executive Director for REM, Ohio, Jo oversees statewide operations, business growth and new business development. Jo joined the organization in 1987 when REM began services in Ohio. In her over 35 year career, Jo has been personally involved in helping grow the company from supporting people only in residential settings in a single County to a full spectrum of residential and day support services in over 45 counties in the state. Under her direction, REM is committed to providing services that are forward-thinking and focus on the future of DD services.

I have been a regular participant in OPRA through committees, budget activity, conferences, and other initiatives throughout my entire 35 + DD career. Being a part of the board has been a desire of mine for numerous years and I would be extremely committed to the objectives of OPRA in positively impacting the DD community for the future. I do feel district Board Members need to do a better job involving and including the membership of their districts. These meetings used to occur and helped members feel involved in areas outside of the full OPRA membership.

Thank you for your consideration.



Kristine Willhite – CEO, Siffrin, Inc.

Kristine Willhite has an extensive business background, but is also, a parent and sister of someone with a developmental disability. She has demonstrated her passion for serving the underserved which began with her experiences at a very young age growing up with a brother who had a rare syndrome that caused intellectual and developmental disabilities including blindness. Her brother, now deceased, received services from the agency Kristine is now CEO of. She was able to see how provider services enabled him to live independently and feel pride in his accomplishments. As an adult, Kristine also fostered and provided respite for many children who had an intellectual and/or developmental disability for than a decade. She adopted one of her foster placements who has autism and he continues to live with Kristine and her husband as an adult.

Kristine holds a MA in Nonprofit Administration from Louisiana State University Shreveport as well as a BA in Education from Kent State University and has two decades of management experience. Kristine served on the Siffrin Board of Directors for two years and began her position as CEO in October 2021. Prior to coming to Siffrin, she was a very active part of the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRA) and served as the state Chair of the Family and Community Services Committee. She has been an OPRA member in good standing since she began working with Siffrin and is ready to offer her time and talents to OPRA's mission.

I have a great respect for the impactful work that OPRA does in supporting, advocating, and being a voice for providers. Given this opportunity to express my interest, I am willing to give of my time and talents to represent District 5 and assist with identified areas of need that will ultimately shape the quality, quantity, and retention of Ohio providers so that each individual receiving services can achieve their best life.