



Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Mark Davis, President of the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA). OPRA is a statewide association of 160 private providers who serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am here to talk about the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities funding provisions in Am. Sub. H.B. 64. We appreciate President Faber's public implication of the Senate's desire to restore cuts made to the Department of Developmental Disabilities budget in the House of Representatives due to the acceptance of LSC cost projections. We respectfully ask the Senate to restore these cuts in the Omnibus amendment.

I have worked in Ohio's developmental disabilities system for many years and have never witnessed the kinds of diverse pressures for systemic change we are now facing. CMS has recently published significant rule clarifications governing integration in their home and community based waivers. The Department of Justice is actively looking at states across the country to ensure compliance with the ADA and Disability Rights Ohio is on record with the threat of litigation. Funding and workforce challenges remain an everyday threat and we continue to see individuals and families in immediate need of services.

That being said, over the last fifteen years the state has retreated from its obligations to fund developmental disability services. From FY 2001 through FY 2014 (exclusive of the transfer of the ICF program and the TDD Waiver from ODM to DODD) the Department of Developmental Disabilities has actually seen a reduction of state general revenue funds of almost 7%. To be clear, I am not talking about failing to keep pace with inflation, (36% over that time period). I am saying there are less general revenue funds committed to DODD today than there was in FY 2001!

In response to all of the above, Director Martin and the Administration announced with the introduction of HB 64 an historic investment of new monies into the developmental disabilities system. This historic investment is elegantly designed to address the multiple pressures our system faces. This new investment is an interrelated and interwoven package of initiatives that demand to be considered in their entirety. One may also argue that it provides a legitimate defense against outside litigation.

It is important to note that these initiatives have statewide impact and are most appropriately funded by the state and not left to individual county DD boards to fund.

As mentioned, due to the acceptance of LSC cost projections, funding was cut significantly in the House passed budget. Without a restoration of those funds the new initiatives are in jeopardy. We cannot pick and choose as to which of these initiatives are more important. They are a package. Again we request that funding be restored in the Omnibus Amendment to the Administration's proposed levels so that our system can benefit as a whole.

We were disappointed to see that the Substitute Bill included an additional cut of \$5.2M GRF in FY16 and \$5.3M GRF in FY17 originally designed in the Governor's proposed budget for wage increases for direct care staff. Community providers are facing a workforce crisis. For the first time in memory we are



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seeing providers turn down opportunities to serve new individuals because they simply cannot find new staff. The 6% rate increase beginning in FY16 was in direct recognition of the challenges of recruiting and retaining direct care staff. Addressing this workforce issue is OPRA's number one priority. We ask that the Senate restore the cuts made in the Substitute Bill and fully fund the Department of Developmental Disabilities Budget as the Administration introduced.

Ohio's employer liability with independent providers in the Medicaid program appears very real and has the potential to increase cost in our system and take resources away from people with disabilities. OPRA represents all DD providers in Ohio, including both agency and independent providers. We do not think it is helpful for any situation to pit one against the other. We believe an acceptable compromise could be close at hand and are prepared to continue to meet with the administration and other stakeholders to negotiate an agreeable compromise that does not take resources away from people with disabilities.

Thank you.