



July 15, 2022

ATTN: Governor DeWine

CC: Scott Partika, Jonathon Field, Director Corcoran, Director McElroy, Director Vanderhoff, Director Hauck, Director Madden, Director Criss, Director Ashenhurst, Director Damschroder, Director Gardner, Director Siddens, Lt. Governor Husted, Representative Lipps, Representative Holmes, Representative Oelslager, Representative Plummer, Representative Cupp, Senator Dolan, Senator Gavarone, Senator S. Huffman, Senator Antani, Senator M. Huffman

FROM: The Ohio Olmstead Task Force

RE: The Direct Care Workforce Expansion Working Group

Dear Governor DeWine,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the Ohio Olmstead Task Force, a statewide grassroots coalition of Ohioans with disabilities, family members, advocates, and organizations advocating for the rights of people with disabilities to live, work, and participate in their communities of choice. We appreciate the time you have taken to meet with us and discuss the current Direct Care Workforce crisis in Ohio. We agree that involving multiple state agencies is imperative in coming up with long-term, sustainable solutions. However, without those affected at the table to inform the discussion and design the solutions, the workgroup is missing a critical partner. People with disabilities deserve a meaningful voice.

As individuals who are and will be impacted by the decisions made by this workgroup, we have identified various solutions that would solve this crisis, and such proposals are best addressed by individuals with direct experience. The most pressing solution is having representation in the newly formed working group. **It is imperative that the new Direct Care Workforce Expansion Working Group include members with disabilities. Guest speakers are not members and are granted only a minor voice.** People with disabilities have valuable lived experience, knowledge, and skills to offer this working group. We ask that there is “Nothing About Us Without Us!”.

Agency representatives and legislators have not recognized the urgency and real issues present in this crisis and the need for significant engagement (not just limited input) from those affected. What began as a workforce shortage in 2015 has now become an emergency where many people with disabilities and many families, have no help, or no reliable help, and are being forced to either live in unsafe conditions or go into institutions. **Members of the community with disabilities are experiencing a direct care crisis emergency that puts lives at risk.** Without disability representation in state-level groups, crucial information will be left out of important discussions and the state will not get any closer to the long-term, sustainable solutions needed to solve this crisis.

We are concerned that, without appropriate representation, the Direct Care Workforce Expansion Group will be ill-advised and potentially misinterpret survey results. We believe, as formed, the Direct Care Workforce Expansion Working Group cannot go far enough to address the emergency that people with disabilities and their families are currently experiencing and may produce unrealistic results that will impact us for years to come.

We respectfully ask that you please respond to this letter within the week, so we know you have heard our concerns. We are aware that individuals were asked to speak on assigned topics at the end of July to this group; however, we look forward to hearing how many seats at the working group table will be filled by people with disabilities prior to your next scheduled meeting. We would also appreciate you setting up a meeting with us within the next week to discuss this letter and how we can work together immediately and effectively to include people with disabilities as members of the Direct Care Workforce Expansion Group.

Sincerely,

Katie Shelley, Renee Wood
Co-Chairs of the Ohio Olmstead Task Force
Kshell621@gmail.com, babydoe8@aol.com

Jennifer Kucera
Chair of the OOTF Direct Care Crisis Work Group
Jenniferkucera134@gmail.com

Additional individuals and organizations that support this letter are as follows:

Maria Matzik, Consumer and Disability Rights Advocate, maria.matzik@acils.com
The Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee
The Ability Center of Greater Toledo
Katie Hunt-Thomas, kthomas@abilitycenter.org
Lisa Marn, PCA/LTSS Coordinator, Services for Independent Living, Inc., lmarn@sil-oh.org
The Center for Disability Empowerment
Disability Rights Ohio
Kim Kelly Parent/Guardian/Provider/Advocate, kkelly_73@hotmail.com
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio
Melody Burba, melody.burba@acils.com
Jason Harris, Jasonpharris07@gmail.com