

S.2210**Proponent Testimony****United States Senate Special Committee on Aging****Brittanie Maddox****Disability Rights Advocate, The Ability Center of Greater Toledo****March 29, 2022****THE ABILITY CENTER**5605 MONROE STREET
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Chairman Casey, Ranking Member Tim Scott, and members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on S.2210 Better Care Better Jobs Act. My name is Brittanie Maddox, and I am a Disability Rights Advocate with The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, a Center for Independent Living serving seven counties in Northwest Ohio. The mission of The Ability Center is to advocate, educate, partner, and provide services that support people with disabilities to thrive within their communities. We are in support of S.2210 and believe that this legislation will positively impact people with disabilities.

On behalf of The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, I urge Congress to support S.2210 to increase supports to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) as well as increase funding and resources for the direct support workforce. If enacted, S.2210 will make significant changes that would support people with disabilities to live and thrive within their communities.

In Ohio, people with disabilities who rely on in-home care are experiencing devastating crises. Many of those individuals are forced into institutions and nursing homes due to provider shortages. It is difficult to find and retain a direct support professional due to low wages, high-turnover rate, difficult certification processes, and the increasing costs of goods and services. Without in-home care, people with disabilities may be unable to get out of bed, perform daily life activities, and forced to isolate from their community. Direct support professionals are a vital part of the workforce that assist people with disabilities and their families to live independently.

According to a PHI report, "Direct Care Workers in The United States: Key Facts," in-home care workers are significantly under paid, majorly comprised of women and women of color¹. In 2020, the average national

¹ PHI. (2021, September 7). *Direct Care Workers in the United States: Key Facts*. <https://phinational.org/resource/direct-care-workers-in-the-united-states-key-facts-2/>



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median income was \$13.56 an hour and 45 percent of direct care workers rely on a form of public assistance like Medicaid, food assistance, as well as others. In Ohio, direct support professionals on average make \$12.10 which does not cover their basic needs. Without benefits, equitable wages, and resource supports for this growing workforce, many individuals are forced to leave their positions thus putting their clients at risk for institutional living. Expanding funding and resources to HCBS will not only assist those whom they support but will improve the lives of these professionals. All workers in The United States deserve to be equitably compensated for their work and provided opportunities to grow within their field of choice.

We strongly urge Congress to enact the Better Care Better Jobs Act, which will provide more money and resources to supporting direct support professionals that reflects their value in the communities and to people with disabilities.

Thank you for reviewing my submission of Proponent Testimony. My contact information is provided below and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

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