

Support for House Bill 49
Lucas County Healthier Buckeye Council
Direct Service Provider – DD Employee Retention Grant

Thank you for inviting me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 49: Healthier Buckeye. My name is Stephen MacDonald and I am the Bridges Out of Poverty Coordinator at the Lucas County Family and Children First Council. I am a certified *Bridges Out of Poverty* (BOP) and *Getting Ahead* facilitator. The Lucas County Healthier Buckeye Council (HBC), also called the “Impact Coalition”, is comprised of leadership in key community sectors including education, business, faith, nonprofit, philanthropic and civic sectors. The mission of the HBC is to engage and equip people and sectors of our community in building sustainable resources that create stability for all. So the purpose of the Healthier Buckeye grant, which is people to move themselves and their families to self-sufficiency in the workforce, is aligned with our mission.

Our Healthier Buckeye pilot grant has created a sustainable, replicable prototype to increase retention for under-resourced, entry-level employees. Prior to the release of the Healthier Buckeye Council RFGA last March, we were already working with the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities to support employee retention for their provider agencies. The “provider agencies” are businesses/employers that provide services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (DD). The average employee turnover rate for DD providers in Lucas County and in Ohio is 50% and represents a crisis for everyone involved. In a survey from the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) the top three reasons employees leave their jobs are lack of transportation, lack of childcare, and lack of training and support.

As a result of the grant, we developed an Employer Resource Network (ERN) involving eight significant employers representing 1700 employees. Through the ERN, the employers share resources, collect data, and create economies of scale that improve recruitment and

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retention. Together, they contribute to the cost of hiring a retention specialist or “success coach” whose mission is to keep their employees on the job. The Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio (HCNO) has hired five Community Health Workers to help ERN employees build resources. We are providing Bridges Out of Poverty (BOP) training to improve individual, organizational and community capacity to increase employee stability. Multiple organizations have created innovative methods of supporting the ERN employers to improve retention and increase stability for vulnerable employees.

The DSP Retention grant partners are well on their way to accomplishing the goals of the grant. Outcomes achieved as of March 2017 are listed below.

1. 240 staff and volunteers from collaborating organizations have been trained in Bridges Out of Poverty (BOP) so they can be mentors and allies to under-resourced employees and support them to increase self-sufficiency and stay in the workforce.
2. Two Getting Ahead in the Workplace classes (24 participants total) started this week. Two more classes are scheduled to begin following the completion of the first two classes.
3. James Vander Hulst of DISC (Disruptive Innovations for Social Change) has built 17 successful ERNs in Michigan and New York. James is consulting with Lucas and Marion Counties to develop the first two Ohio ERNs. We have also collaborated with James’ team to implement a reporting database that allows monthly measurement of success metrics including tracking of referrals and resolution of employee needs.
4. We have hired a success coach who has many years of service in the DD industry and other relevant work experience. The coach is now

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fully onboard, working with community health workers and cultivating relationships with each ERN business and their employees.

5. Administrators and HR from the eight ERN employers met each month (July 2016 – March 2017) with consultants and HBC partners to establish the ERN:
 - a. Completed ERN agreement – September 2016
 - b. Hired ERN Success Coach – December 2016
 - c. Purchased and trained in ERN tracking software – December 2016
 - d. ERN name and logo chosen – January 2017
 - e. Created shared ERN Calendar – January 2017
 - f. 75 administrators, HR, and supervisors from the ERN businesses have received BOP training

Fifteen local trainers were certified to provide DSPaths training to Direct Service Providers in February 2017.

A work support fair was held on January 25, 2017. Its objective was to allow the success coach, the five dedicated community health workers, and ERN provider agency HR, management, and supervisory staff to meet with and receive information from a variety of community work support organizations.

Work is currently underway to build a mechanism to funnel recruitment efforts through the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities in order to more effectively reach job seekers, assess competencies and possession of job requirements, and then route prospective employees to appropriate agencies. The key players in this effort are the ERN businesses, Pathway – Lucas County's CAA, and the Lucas County Department of Planning and Development.

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Four of the ERN businesses are using Employer Sponsored Small Dollar Loans (ESSDLs) via Toledo Metro and Sun Federal Credit Unions and more employers plan to join these programs. ESSDLs are intended to combat predatory payday loans. They help employees easily obtain low-interest loans with reasonable repayment terms and the opportunity to contribute money to a savings account following loan payoff. As of February 28, 2017, 69 ESSDLs have been dispersed via the ERN employers.

Nine individuals were trained to facilitate Bridges Out of Poverty trainings in December 2016, and 22 individuals trained to facilitate Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By-World classes in February 2017. These trainings increase community capacity so that organizations can provide trainings for their staff, volunteers and clients.

We have improved HBC cross-sector collaboration to sustain the initiatives implemented through support to establish a strategic framework for overall organizational development from Toledo Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

The ERN prototype and associated tools will be replicated across Lucas County. Plans are already underway to start new ERN's with major health care providers, banks, and other businesses.

Lucas County's efforts are already being duplicated across Ohio. OPRA is already working with BOP communities of practice in Ohio to replicate the Lucas County's HBC prototype for its members. OPRA represents 150 businesses with 30,000 employees in 77 of Ohio's 88 counties; they are promoting ERNs, Employer Sponsored Small Dollar Loans (ESSDLs), BOP training, and Getting Ahead in the Workplace classes for their members. HCNO, OPRA and the Ohio Alliance of

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Direct Support Professionals (OADSP) are 1) connecting state agencies to an existing community health worker program, 2) monitoring ERN progress with an eye to relatively seamless replication across the state, and 3) providing necessary state-mandated Direct Support Provider (DSP) training. As is evidenced above, Lucas County has already achieved many milestones and is continuing to make progress toward a strong, business driven ERN with increased employee retention.

Before I close, I want to make it clear that I believe that many programs and organizations benefit from ongoing funding from dependable funding streams. However, the beauty of the Healthier Buckeye Council grant is that it only provides funding for the start-up costs. Once the prototypes are established, they keep going. The money, talent, time and effort needed to continue the projects come from the involved organizations, because it is in their self-interest. The ERN businesses want to improve their employee retention; they save money and provide better services to their clients. Ohio Means Jobs helps employers connect with employees. Banks and credit unions achieve their missions and increase their customer base. Non-profits and government agencies improve their outcomes by working with ERN's with motivated employees who understand how to build their resources. Faith based organizations are more effective in alleviating suffering of people in poverty and shepherding members toward spiritual and economic growth. As these goals and outcomes are achieved, it is, at least, a five win scenario. Individuals living with daily instability win, organizations win, employers win, local community's win and Ohio wins. The Lucas County Healthier Buckeye Council would like the opportunity to start another sustainable, replicable prototype project next year with the support of HBC funding.