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Testimony on HB 166
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee

Chairman Romanchuck, Ranking Member West, and esteemed committee members.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Richard Patterson and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Nick Amster, Inc., our main office is located in Wooster, Ohio in Wayne County. We are a not for profit business that provides services for 233 adults with developmental disabilities over 4 counties. We broke from the Wayne County Board of Developmental Disabilities in 2013 and became a private entity.

I have been in this field for nearly 28 years and consider it a privilege to serve the individuals we work for.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities. With these budget initiatives and the leadership of Director Davis, I think there is a new hope among my counterparts and I that all facets of our field will finally be in lock step and work much better together.

I am testifying before you for three reasons.

First, I want to show my support for the new non-medical transportation rates that have been submitted to Director Davis. We have been mandated to get our individuals in the community to integrate with their non-disabled peers and while we all agree with this philosophy it is expensive to fulfill. I have a wonderful staff and they have done just a spectacular job of getting individuals into the community. 72 of our individuals belong to some kind of a regularly meeting club or social network. We provide all the transportation for these activities. We've had to eat that cost up until now and it has been a serious drain on our program's finances. This new proposal would fix that problem and allow us to expand this part of our program even more. It will help greatly with our placement of individuals in jobs in the community as well.

Second, as I said before, we have the mandate for community inclusion, which also includes community employment, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act commonly referred to as WIOA, the training we have to put our staff through is notably more expensive than it was twelve years ago and can leave us shorthanded for days in our program. We also have to jump through many hoops just to provide services for individuals that just graduated high school. So now you have individuals that may go months without services after graduation.

The Medicaid rates we bill for completing day array services are based off of a formula from 2007 when most of the day array services were provided by County Boards of Developmental Disabilities. The rates for day services for individuals with developmental disabilities have not since been adjusted to

accurately reflect today's service delivery landscape. I would like to ask the committee to look at how to bring funding more in line with today's service requirements.

Finally, I know there is a direct service professional or DSP crisis in our field. We are supportive of the Governor and Director's DSP wage increases but know there is more that can be done. I'm going to take you back to my spectacular staff providing these day services. We have been private for 6 years. Half my staff has been with us for at least four years and 80% have been with us over two years. They are a very dedicated crew and we've tried to reward them for their loyalty. We are right now at about the maximum we can pay them without some kind of relief.

Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring my concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process please let me know.