



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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of HB 166. I am Philip Miller, CEO for Portage Industries, Inc. in Portage County and MASCO, Inc. in Mahoning County. Both entities are non-profit corporations that together serve approximately 350 people with developmental disabilities in day program services and supports. In Portage County, we are post transition to privatized services since June, 2018. In Mahoning County we are approximately 60% privatized. It is a challenging time of change and adjustment for the people we serve and our organizations' implementation of service strategies moving into the future.

My perspective is that we need flexibility and multiple options or tools in the tool box to meet the needs and preferences of each individual we serve. Statewide, we sometimes have a tendency to adopt "one size fits all" approaches and mandate services accordingly. I watched with interest some of the testimony of self-advocates yesterday. Every one of the advocates had specific things they wanted and it was personal to them. For that reason, I support the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine, Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities and Director Miller of Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. As an example, the proposal on non-medical transportation will add flexibility that permits more cost-effective vehicles and eliminates trip limitations. Those two features alone will make it possible for providers to improve personalized access to the things people with disabilities want and need to be a part of; very little happens without the critical service transportation provides. Currently, providers like Portage Industries, Inc. and MASCO, Inc. are required to provide opportunities for people we serve to be engaged in their community. However, there is no provision for the transportation to get them there. So we operate with an unfunded mandate that with this legislation will reimburse providers for the needed transportation.

Others have testified eloquently before this committee about the workforce crisis we are facing today. I won't pile on; but will add my support for the proposal that will increase wages for Homemaker Personal Care Services.

Our system won't be able to accomplish this by the end of the current budget planning cycle but we must update our reimbursement rate formulas to reflect the significant change in how we deliver services. We are serving people in smaller groups so the reimbursement system based on 1/16, 1/12, 1/6 and 1/3 is no longer relevant. The current acuity determination which is tied to the individual budget for day program must be updated. I hope the next budget cycle will address this need.

Finally, I want to show my support Director Millers budget initiatives. Competitive, integrated employment is the ideal vocational outcome. Currently, our two organizations support approximately 60 people in community-based jobs. Community engagement vocationally and non-vocationally is really

our future in developmental disability services. But it doesn't come easily; the support needs of people vary widely and our profession must find innovative and creative ways to make this happen – geared to the specific interests and support needs of each person we serve. Next week, it will be our privilege to host Director Miller in our Ravenna operation and we will talk about this very issue; support needs and vocational success in the community.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to attempt answers to your questions.

Respectfully,

Philip E Miller, CEO
Portage Industries, Inc.
MASCO, Inc.