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May 15, 2019

Ohio Senate  
Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

Chairperson Burke and Esteemed Committee Members,

I am Brenda Smith and, as the Executive Director Riverview Industries, Incorporated, located in Ottawa County, I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the proposed budget provisions for the Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Our agency provides employment, adult day support, homemaker/personal care, and transportation services to 150 individuals across three northwest counties of Ohio. We value our 90 DSPs and the services they provide in employment, and home and community life.

I want to express appreciation to Governor DeWine, Director Davis, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Ohio House of Representatives for demonstrating their dedication to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by making an unprecedented investment in our system. We have a longstanding, rich history of funding and providing a variety of meaningful, quality services that enhance the lives of the people we serve. With this investment in our system, and the leadership of Director Davis, I believe Ohio will continue to be a leader in the field of developmental disabilities.

As a provider of homemaker/personal care, I am especially appreciative of the administration's generous proposal for DSP wage increases, and the substantial commitment from your colleagues in the House to build off of the DeWine Administration's executive budget to further increase the average

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wage of a DSP providing the homemaker/personal care service. If you speak with a direct support professional, they will tell you their work is very rewarding, however, it is well-known they are severely under-compensated. For our agency, your investment means we can better compete for staff to increase capacity, and we can better compensate direct support professionals for their investment of emotional labor in serving people with developmental disabilities.

It is a privilege to serve people with developmental disabilities and to be a part of something larger than myself to move people toward life they want to live. The current administration under Governor DeWine, self-advocates, parents, families, county boards, private providers, and the Ohio House and Senate are to be commended for their work and dedication to the field. On behalf of my agency, my staff, and the individuals we support, I encourage you, Senator Burke and Members of this Committee, to support the proposed budget provisions relevant to the Department of Developmental Disabilities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brenda Smith  
Executive Director  
Riverview Industries, Inc.