



**Testimony on HB 110
House Finance Committee**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and Esteemed Committee Members,

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer this testimony on Ohio's operating budget.

My name is Jeff Johnson and I am the executive director of Weaver Industries. Inc. (Weaver). Weaver's corporate office is in Akron, Ohio, and we operate several facilities throughout Summit County. Weaver is a non-profit agency that provides supports for 183 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Summit, Stark, Portage, Medina and Cuyahoga Counties. We employ 94 staff.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Davis for the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). With these budget initiatives and the leadership of Director Davis, Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities will continue to receive the vital services that organizations like Weaver provide.

Weaver operates four distinct social enterprise business divisions that provide vocational training and minimum-wage employment to adults with I/DD. In addition, our Community Employment department works with area businesses to provide employment in integrated community work settings. At host businesses' locations, groups of individuals with I/DD, supported by an on-site Weaver supervisor, perform tasks that are the same as/similar to the host businesses' employees. Finally, our Employment and Transition Services department assists individuals who have expressed an interest in gaining a job in their communities reach their employment goals.

Weaver provides program services to transition-age students (14 to 22 years) and adults (ages 18+) with I/DD who require assistance to obtain and maintain employment. All program services are provided by certified members of Weaver's direct support staff. Program services are tailored to assist each person with choosing employment outcomes based on their individual preferences, strengths, abilities and needs. Weaver, working with partner agencies and business customers, continually advocates for increased training, employment opportunities and earnings for the people we serve.

The disability support industry has historically suffered from high-turnover rates for direct care staff – or Direct Support Professional (DSPs). Additional investments through HB110 will allow our industry to increase DSP compensation to match the professional level of the services they provide. Allowing us to compensate our DSPs in line with fair market wages and fringe benefits could help reduce turnover rates and allow providers to hire, train and cultivate a professional, qualified and stable workforce to provide the supports needed by thousands of individuals in Ohio who live with I/DD.

To best support these services and the Ohioans who receive and provide them, I encourage you to add the following initiatives into Ohio's biennium budget:

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to fund much needed Homemaker and Personal Care, Day and Vocational Services and Nonmedical Transportation, Medicaid home and community-based waiver services rate increase. *These increases will provide much needed funds for Direct Support Professional wages, support for other front-line professionals and sustain the infrastructure necessary to provide our services.*

- Increase general revenue fund appropriations in DODD's budget to support the reimbursement formula for intermediate care facilities (ICF).
- Support a budget amendment that would allow ICFs to choose between a reimbursement rate freeze or a continuation of the formula for the first year of the biennium.
- Support the creation of a Task Force to address our system's workforce challenges. *This Task Force will identify several initiatives and projects designed to help providers recruit and retain a qualified workforce.*
- Support the as introduced budget for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! 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.

Respectfully submitted,



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