

Main Office
150 E. Fourth Street
P.O. Box 916
Mansfield, Ohio 44901-0916
Ph: 419.774.4400
Fax: 419.774.4409

985 W. Longview Ave.
Mansfield, Ohio 44906
Fax: 419.774.4497



971 W. Longview Ave.
Mansfield, Ohio 44906
Fax: 419.747.3307

1650 E. Southern Ave.
Bucyrus, Ohio 44820
Ph: 419.563.2180
Fax: 419.563.2198

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
House Finance Committee

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeny, and esteemed committee members,

Richland Newhope Industries, Inc. (RNI, Inc.) Management Team and Executive Director, Amanda South, want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

RNI, Inc. has our main office located in Mansfield, Ohio with a service area of ten (10) counties which include: Richland, Crawford, Ashland, Wayne, Morrow, Marion, Huron, Knox, Seneca, and Wyandot. We are an organization that provides homemaker/personal care, transportation, day, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of one hundred and thirty (130) employees feel privileged to be entrusted to provide quality essential services to a total of four hundred and forty-two (442) Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Richland Newhope Industries, Inc (RNI, Inc.) is supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide the critical support on which the people we serve, and their families rely.

The DD provider community and RNI, Inc. as a member of that community has experienced a significant shortage of workers since the start of the COVID pandemic in early 2020. In 2019 prior to the pandemic, RNI, Inc., received over 150 applicants for our limited vacant DSP positions. In 2022, RNI, Inc. had only 44 applicants for our numerous vacant DSP positions. With the increased competition for workers within our service areas, RNI, Inc. has not maintained competitive wages due to the reimbursement rates available through the waiver program administered by DODD. The reimbursement rate for the waiver program administered by DODD has not had a comprehensive adjustment since 2008. RNI, Inc. is dedicated to providing quality essential services to Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but without an accompanying competitive reimbursement rate the ability to do so has been threatened as we are unable to offer competitive wages to our workforce. Without competitive wages for our workforce RNI, Inc. has been unable to recruit and maintain a robust workforce to deliver and expand these essential services to Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Ohioans with intellectual and development disabilities rely on the services RNI, Inc. provides for their families to work themselves or for aging caregivers to be assured that their loved ones are cared for within their communities. The direct support professionals (DSPs), provide daily services that facilitate the learning and maintenance of skills including job readiness, assistance with personal care, administration of medication, administration of vital tube feedings, integration into their communities, assistance with securing community employment, mastering job tasks in community employment, maintaining community employment, transportation to and from their homes to their greater communities and employment. Without the essential services provided by RNI, Inc. and other waiver

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service providers, Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities would be reliant on their families or more costly facilities such as nursing home or developmental centers to meet their basic needs and ensure health, safety, and skill development.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck and Director Miller, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by RNI, Inc. We encourage this committee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and OOD and to invest additional dollars through budget amendment HCC0656 into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

With your leadership, together we can ensure these essential services are available to the Ohioans that so greatly need them! Thank you again, for the opportunity and privilege to bring our concerns before you and if I can ever be of any help in this process, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Amanda South, Executive Director
asouth@rniinc.com
150 East 4th Street
Mansfield, Ohio 44902
419-774-4412