



**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget  
House Finance Committee**

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

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

My name is Dave Rastoka and I am the Owner of Advancing Abilities, and we are located in Ross, Pike and Scioto Counties. We are an organization that provides services within intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and we also provide residential day, and employment services as well as services via the community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 230 employees are proud to provide essential services to over 120 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities

I am very 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 supports on which the people we serve and their families rely on.

We cannot compete with Wal- Mart, Amazon Distribution Centers, the fast-food restaurants, the local retail stores, Uber and Door Dash Drivers etc in regards to wages. Our recruitment pool of potential workers is getting smaller and smaller in regards to people that actually want to work with people with developmental disabilities. We had to give notices to 4 families last month because we just do not have the staff to serve their loved ones. It is very sad and frustrating and the problem will just get worse, if we do not receive some much-needed funding.

Families are relying on us for services and we just can't meet their needs. We receive calls weekly to bi-weekly, asking for help and it is so hard, so, so hard to tell them, we can't help you. We have turned away approximately 40 families in 2022. What typically happens to a family when they cannot find services is, one of the parents has to then quit their job, to stay home with their son or daughter and then that company has to begin looking for a replacement worker. It is a domino effect that will continue spiral out of control, because we can not pay our staff a respectable hourly wage that is competitive with other industries in our counties.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by Advancing Abilities. We encourage this subcommittee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars 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 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.

*Dave Rastoka*     Dave Rastoka

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