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**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee**

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members,

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

My name is Rebecca Garrison, and I am the Employment Services Coordinator of RT Industries, Inc., and we are located in Troy, Ohio. We are an organization that provides Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services funded by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) for upwards to fifty (50) school aged students through aging adults monthly of Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our entire organization employs just over one hundred (100) people. Approximately ten (10) of these employees provide VR services through OOD.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including job coaches, threatens our ability to achieve our mission of helping people with disabilities find great jobs in their communities. These budget initiatives, and the leadership of Director Miller, will support us to recruit and retain the staff needed to continue to provide vital employment services to Ohioans with Developmental Disabilities. Attached is an example of the great work RT Industries' employment staff accomplished this year through services and funding from OOD.

RT Industries primary focus is helping people with disabilities gain and maintain employment in competitive integrated employment. Our organization supports school-aged students with Pre-ETS and Summer Youth services. With adults, our supports range from Community-Based Assessments (CBAs) to on-the-job support such as Job Coaching.

Increased funding is an absolute necessity in order to maintain employees within our organization and provide quality service to persons served. The employees who have stayed have an emotional bond with their job due to relationships made and the personal reward of helping people with disabilities. Over the past 5 years I have seen many Employment Specialists leave their positions with sadness. Simply because they could not afford to stay in the position. With the loss of employees and the lack of applicants based off pay, the quality of service then declines due to overworked and underpaid employees.

Employment Specialists are also required to work a flexible schedule based off the schedule of the individuals. This can mean working 1st 2nd or 3rd shift, weekends, holidays and short notice with no additional pay.

Helping people achieve personal success by developing skills to confidently work, interact and thrive in the community.

~ Safety ~ Collaboration ~ Camaraderie ~ Growth ~ Integrity ~ Excellence ~ Innovation ~





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We encourage the General Assembly to approve the Governor's budget proposal for OOD.

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.**

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With Funding from OOD, RT Industries is able to provide Employment Services for individuals with disabilities.



One important service we are able to provide with this funding is the Community Based Assessment. This service gives individuals the chance to try out employment before job searching to be sure it is the right fit for them. This also shows the Employment Specialist what the persons strengths and weaknesses are for community integrated employment.



During Job Development the Employment Specialist will assist with making their resume, practicing for interviews, and working on skills they will need for competitive integrated employment. This then leads into job searching. Once the individual has accepted a job offer, they will move into on the job supports.

An Employment Specialist will provide one on one job coaching that will assist with training, developing natural supports, learning assistive technology to be used on the job, and job retention services to support both the employer and the person for success in their employment.



The expected outcome of Employment Services is the person's achievement of competitive integrated employment.

We wouldn't be able to provide these supports to these individuals without our partnership with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.