



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

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Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members,
I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Brittany Kerr and I am the community engagement coordinator of RT Industries, and we are located in Troy Ohio, serving Miami, Shelby, Darke, Auglaize & Montgomery Counties. We are an organization that provides day, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of thirty (30) Direct Support Professionals are proud to provide essential services to over one hundred fifty (150) Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities each month.

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 our people we serve and their families rely.

Each day we are faced with struggles with not having enough staff due to the reimbursement rate. We can't get new staff to apply, and it is a struggle to keep the staff we have, when the cost of living has gone up 8% but our reimbursement rate has not increased that much we can not compete with places like Starbucks and Target where you have a lot less responsibility with an increased wage. We need to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates to service providers so they can pay DSPs a living wage that is competitive with retail industries and state-employed DSPs working in our institutions to stabilize this workforce. Without these increases we cannot sustain; we are a vital part of our individuals lives along with their families. We provide a service that without it our folks would most likely be isolated, prone to abuse or exploitation, and report higher rates of poor health outcomes.

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 RT Industries 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.

*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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