

RHAM

Residential Home Association of Marion, Inc.

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Adam M. Guinther • Executive Director

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 the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Adam Guinther, and I am the Executive Director of Residential Home Association of Marion, Inc. (aka RHAM), and we are located in Marion County but also serve individuals in Crawford County. We are an organization that provides residential services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 76 employees are proud to provide essential services to 47 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 our the people we serve and their families rely.

As I mentioned, we currently employ 76 people. Over the last two years that number is down from 110. Which made us one of the larger employers in Marion County. We are now only serving 47 individuals and as recently as two years ago that number was 74. Both significant declines are directly due to the fact that we are not able to pay our staff a competitive wage. RHAM has always been a great place to work and grow. However, employees now face the struggle of “do I leave a job that makes a difference in the lives of others, or do I provide better for my family?”. The choice is clear as to what has been happening.

As recently as 2020 (the initial year of COVID) we were able to hire 52 people. In 2021 that number declined to 9! In 2022 we were only able to hire 11. From an employer’s perspective it feels as though we have tried everything to attract and retain employees. In 2021 we spent \$10,000 on billboard ads that ran for an entire year to try and recruit people into this field. We had only one applicant and once they learned of the pay rate, they no longer had interest. We’ve offered sign on bonuses, employee referral bonuses, you name it we have tried it.

The direct impact of our shrinking workforce is felt by everyone. The most impacted though are the individuals we serve, their families, and the DSPs. In 2021 we decided as an organization to start selectively choosing which individuals made the most sense to give notice and stop being their provider of service. Ultimately, we ended services with about 20 people. This involved the closing of an entire

RHAM’S mission is to VALUE and RESPECT all people through the promotion of INTERDEPENDENCE and EMPOWERMENT as we provide individualized services.



home, giving notice to a gentleman we loved and had served for over 30 years, along with 15 other challenging individuals. It also removed us from serving in both Morrow and Wyandot Counties. I'm a competitive person, so this was something I struggled to work through. Our existence is based off supporting those that need our services and here we are saying "we cannot do what it is that we are meant to do". To me that does not make any sense. Even though we are serving less people, I still have DSPS working 4000 hours a year. My HR Director is working her fulltime position plus averaging an additional 25 hours a week as a DSP to help cover shifts. This is all too common.

The workforce crisis has been upon us for quite some time, but providers have been able to triage their situations and somehow survive. That approach is no longer possible. We need your help!

RHAM has been in business for 48 and a half years. A few years ago, I was looking forward to celebrating our 50th Anniversary. My fear is if nothing changes, our 50th Anniversary may be a finish line instead of a celebration.

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 RHAM. 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 an hour. 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.



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