

Good Afternoon and thank you for allowing me to come today to tell you how thankful I am for all of the support that I have received that has made a tremendous difference in my life enabling me to live in my own place and to navigate my life independently with the customized support that I need.

My name is Phil Kirk and I am legally blind but a home owner still making monthly mortgage payments. By the time I turn 65 it will be paid for. I was 32 when I bought it.

I was working for LICCO in an enclave which is a group of people with disabilities that has a supervisor with them all the time. LICCO encouraged me that I had skills that would support me working in the community. Through the support of OOD, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, I have a job now that I really like. My coworkers are nice, we get along and everyone looks out for each other. I build two different types of boxes. Sometimes they have me do different jobs like taking items out of packages. My job is important to me because it gives me money to buy things and to live on. I appreciate the transportation support that I receive getting me to and from work.

I live in a smart home that has cameras that connect to remote supports so that I can be alone, but when I need something I can reach out. I don't need a staff person with me all the time because of these remote supports. I only want staff in my home when I need them. Staff come in and help me with cleaning, grocery shopping and getting to/from doctor appointments and around town.

I have staff help me get to the places that are important to me like going to the gym, going out to eat and recently a trip to Zanesville to buy a new drum set. I have a drum studio at my house. When I wasn't working I had less money than I do now.

When I have a quality staff I feel comfortable, it is easier to ask for support knowing that I can trust them. It is good to have them cut up and joke around with, it feels like a buddy or friend. I've been through a lot of staff members over the years. It's like the Ray Stevens song "Where are you tonight I search all over for you and turn around and you are all gone - pff It takes me time to get used to someone being in your life and I become attached to them and then they are gone. I try to not get attached to people. I know it isn't me, people move on but it is hard to get the support we need without keeping good staff..

Thank you for your ongoing support of people with disabilities. Thank you for allowing me to have the finances to have these supports that support my independence and my life.

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