



**Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Interested Party Testimony
HB 33 – FY24-25 State Operating Budget**

**Dr. Richard Smith, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for Autism
March 21, 2023**

Chair Manning and Ranking Member Jarrells, it is an honor to provide testimony today on behalf of the request from S.U.C.C.E.S.S. for Autism in support of their training program, **SUCCESSful Training for Autism: An Interprofessional Collaborative Pilot Program**, to provide, what I consider, to be the best in treatment models for those with neurodiverse needs, especially those with Autism. My name is Dr. Richard Smith, and I can speak to the potency of this program not only as a professional, but as a parent as well.

As a result of a flawed system for diagnosis and lack of understanding about the world of autism, we lost so much precious time in our daughter's life that should have been spent helping her. Initially, a diagnosis was refuted because she was "a girl" and "too smart" to be on the spectrum. While pushing aside our concerns from her mother and I, the system dismissed us and deemed her a "behavior" problem for years. We had concerns from the time that she was three, but it fell on deaf ears. It was in her 5th grade year that things came to a head for our sweet girl, and we had to admit our daughter into a local behavioral facility for two weeks. Contact with her was limited to only two brief phone calls a week with no in-person contact. The doctor at the facility asked if we had considered that she might be on the spectrum. We said yes but couldn't get the diagnosis. His immediate response was, "you have one now." It was at this point, that we began our path with her in The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach. The results were amazing! In a short time, she was able to focus on her authentic self and we began to learn about her world. After a couple of years of steady improvement, she felt comfortable with returning to the mainstream classroom and, while she will live with autism her whole life, she now attends Kent State University and is thriving while pursuing her passion in musical theater. My wife and I have renewed hope knowing that she is armed with the necessary tools to make sense of the world around her.

With my daughter's needs successfully addressed, I began wondering why more people didn't know about this incredible method. Therefore, I asked Dr. Scotese-Wojtila if I could make The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach my capstone project. I set out on a mission to engineer the world's first nine-module webinar on The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach, which was met with great results. I am a different father because of our access to The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach. If more professionals were aware of how potent this approach would be, perhaps my wife and I wouldn't have been

dismissed for years and we wouldn't have lost precious time with our daughter. All professionals need this training to better understand how the world of autism can, in many ways, make the world a better place. Autism is more than behavioral, it's neurological, and The S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Approach treats the brain holistically by first capturing their hearts. Understanding the individual needs of our children is imperative to the learning process. I applaud your consideration of this budget request on behalf of all parents and professionals living in the world of autism. Thank you once again for your time and we welcome any questions you may have.