

CLI Incorporated

Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget

Senate Health Committee

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and esteemed committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities' (OOD) Fiscal Year 24/25 budget.

My name is John Schwartz and I am CEO of CLI Incorporated, and we are located in Norwalk, Ohio. We serve primarily residents from Huron and Erie Counties and are an organization that provides employment services to Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (DD) through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) for approximately 70 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our entire organization employs 18 staff, while 3 provide OOD-funded services.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) and as passed by the House. 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.

CLI's OOD services are primarily PREETS, Career Exploration, Job Development, and Job Coaching—although we routinely adapt to fit each client's unique needs. While we appreciate Ohio's initiative to offer services whose objective is to help people with disabilities get comprehensive community employment training, job development, and initial job coaching—the reality is that the reimbursement rates are insufficient to recruit & retain the staff most likely to help clients reach the highest quality results. Our mission is to help people with DD obtain employment that will afford them meaningful lives. This is unlikely if the staff positions themselves are insufficient to support the same. CLI struggles to recruit and retain high quality staff in an economic environment where every other employer pays more than we do for easier work.

We encourage this committee and the broader Senate to support OOD's budget as passed by the House.

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.

Sincerely,

John Schwartz
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