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**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget  
Senate Health Committee**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and esteemed committee members, Richland Newhope Industries, Inc. (RNI, Inc.) Management Team and Executive Director, Amanda South, want to thank you for the opportunity to share my support for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities' (OOD) Fiscal Year 24/25 budget.

We are an organization that provides employment services to Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). RNI, Inc. has our main office located in Mansfield, Ohio with a service area of 10 counties which include: Richland, Crawford, Ashland, Wayne, Morrow, Marion, Huron, Knox, Seneca, and Wyandot. RNI, Inc. provides OOD services for an annual average of 180 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our entire organization employs 130 employees while 17 provide OOD-funded services.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for 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 disabilities. On average RNI, Inc. is able to annually assist an average of 50 Ohioans with developmental disabilities to find and secure community integrated employment.

RNI, Inc. has over 30 years of experience in providing a wide variety of employment services. Some of the services RNI, Inc. provides include but are not limited to pre-employment services for transition youth, job development services, on the job coaching, community-based assessments, work adjustments, Summer Youth Work Experience, and Job Readiness Training. Currently, RNI, Inc. is supporting people with disabilities to successfully work and train in the medical, hospitality, adult care, retail, food service, nursing home, service, and manufacturing industries. For the past 16 years, RNI, Inc. has operated a Project SEARCH program in partnership with Pioneer Career and Technology Center, Ohio Health – Mansfield, and previously The Ohio State University – Mansfield and North Central State College. This workforce development program is designed for students with disabilities who have deferred graduation to participate in a nine (9) month program that facilitates learning new work skills and soft skills in preparation for integrated employment. Since the start of this program in Richland County, 160 students have graduated and cumulatively 84% of these graduates have obtained community employment.

With the increased competition for workers within our service areas, RNI, Inc. has not been able to maintain competitive wages due to the reimbursement rates available from OOD. RNI, Inc. is dedicated to providing quality essential services to Ohioans with disabilities, but without an accompanying

competitive reimbursement rate the ability to do so has been threatened. Without competitive wages for our workforce RNI, Inc. has been unable to recruit and maintain a robust workforce to deliver and expand these essential services to Ohioans with disabilities.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda South". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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