



Testimony on HB 33: The SFY 24/25 Operating Budget

Senate Health Committee

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

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Justin Blumhorst, and I am the Chief Innovation Officer at Capabilities. I have been with Capabilities since we started in 1997. We are headquartered in St. Marys, and we serve 4,300 people with disabilities annually across the state. Capabilities provides Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services funded by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). Of the 4,300 people we serve each year, 1,935 have intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are OOD's largest private vendor for services. Our organization has 200 employees. Approximately 70% of these employees provide rehabilitation services through OOD funding.

I am here to express my gratitude and support for the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and OOD Director Miller and passed by the House in House Bill 33. The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including our staff of job developers and 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. Below is an example of the great work Capabilities's staff accomplished this year through services and funding from OOD.

At Capabilities, we help people with many types of disabilities. We help people assess their skills and research careers to determine job goals, find jobs, learn jobs, keep jobs, learn to drive, and help them learn computer skills.

Currently, our biggest barrier to helping people find good quality jobs is our high employee turnover rate, which is 55%. Last year our turnover rate was 48%, and this increase in turnover is directly related to the reimbursement that we receive that provides our revenue for wages. We have to promote people and raise their wages, which is again directly related to the reimbursement rate that we receive. Because we struggle to retain staff, we have to send staff long distances to provide services adding greatly to the cost of providing that service.

Our cost for each direct service provider is \$47.29 on average per hour. This includes wages, overhead, administration, medical insurance costs, Bureau of Workers Compensation, local, state and federal taxes, and Unemployment. We strive to have a 10:1 staff to manager ratio so that we can fully support our staff who work so hard daily to provide services to people with disabilities. Another cost related to our turnover is the amount of money it costs to onboard each new employee, which on average for us is \$13,364.

We greatly encourage the Senate to approve the OOD budget initiatives in HB33.

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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Brianna and Job Coach Melissa at her job site Buffalo Wild Wings in Lima.



John proudly showing his Ohio Driving Permit. Job Coach Ann tutored him through this process.



Chad Nolen started working with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) in 2017 while a student at Sidney High School and the Upper Valley Career Center in Piqua, Ohio. At the time, he was studying auto service and made the decision to defer his graduation until 2018 to complete his two-year certificate at the career center.



With help from Maria Noble, OOD Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, his family, and the team supporting him, Chad planned his transition from school to his career and adult life. Chad wasn't going to let his disabilities, which include being on the autism spectrum, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and hearing loss, hold him back. Getting a driver's license and work experience were his top priorities.

Maria worked with Chad on the next steps. Chad completed driver's education at Capabilities, Inc. in St. Marys and got his license. In December 2019, Chad landed a part-time job with a pizza company in Sidney to get him started in the world of work.

As Chad became more comfortable with working, he wanted a job that was more in line with his interests that would also provide increased responsibility. He returned to OOD in June 2021 and began working with Joellen Heatherly, OOD Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, to find a job in automotive support.

Dennis Rutter, Job Developer at Capabilities helped Chad update his resume and prepare for job interviews. When Dennis heard about the job opportunity at Jayna, Inc. in Troy, Ohio, he thought it was a position that might be a good fit for Chad. Jayna, Inc. is a contract manufacturer of precision machine parts that services the automotive industry.

"Chad was very determined to find employment that would work for him," said Dennis. "When he went to Jayna, he liked what he saw and was very interested in the position."

Jayna, Inc. hired Chad for a part-time position in October 2021. A job coach from Capabilities helped Chad adjust and learn the different aspects of his job. Chad operates a bolt press and a broaching machine, working four hours daily, five days a week.

"When Chad learned that he had skills to offer and could move on, it was a huge step," said Joellen. "Chad matured through this process, takes his job seriously, and is a dependable, loyal employee."