



Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
Senate Medicaid Committee

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and esteemed committee members,

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

My name is Bonnie Stockstill and I am an Employment Specialist at RT Industries, and we are located in Troy, OH and serve Miami, Shelby, Auglaize, Darke, and Montgomery counties. RT Industries provides numerous home and community-based waiver program services including Adult Day Services, Non-medical Transportation, Individual Employment Support, Group Employment Support, Career Planning, and Vocational Habilitation which are administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 30 Direct Support Professionals (DSP) employees are proud to provide essential services to 150 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD and very appreciative of the additional investments adopted by the House of Representatives in House Bill 33.

The workforce crisis has greatly affected many employers, however, those providing home and community-based waiver services have known what it is like to be in a workforce crisis before the pandemic began. The pandemic only made finding and keeping employees even more difficult. This still remains as many people have returned to their way of living pre-pandemic. The low reimbursement rates cause non-profits like RT Industries to not be able to raise the starting wage to an amount that people need to be able to live off of. As a direct supervisor, I have experienced several staff who have begun work with RT, but then left after a short amount of time to accept a position at a for-profit business that can offer a competitive wage.

Direct support services are an essential part of the lives of the people we serve. It allows them an opportunity to experience life as you or I do. They can have a social life and even obtain and maintain employment with the services our DSPs provide. RT is able to assist the people we serve with meeting goals they have in life no matter how small they might be. The feeling of elation and pride that comes over them once they meet a goal is an amazing experience to be a part of.

Additionally, the parents, guardians, and natural supports for individuals do not always have the option to stay home and care for their loved one with a disability. Providers such as RT give them an alternative so not only can their loved one enjoy their life, but their family can as well. It offers a respite to help eliminate caring fatigue as well.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by RT Industries. **We encourage this committee to support the House's version of H.B. 33 as it pertains to DODD appropriations. Further, we**

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encourage the Senate to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

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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