



BROOKHILL INDUSTRIES, INC.

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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 Sally Sutter and I am the CEO of Brookhill Center Industries, Inc., and we are located in Putnam County in Northwest Ohio. Brookhill Center Industries, Inc. provides Adult Day Services, Vocational Habilitation and transportation administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of 20 full time & 5 part time employees are proud to provide essential services to 68 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.

Brookhill Center Industries, Inc. has only been able to provide a starting wage of \$12 per hour for the last 6 years. We were able to increase that wage to \$13 per hour for 2023, but it is still a struggle to obtain and keep quality employees in the Direct Support Professional field. There are fast food restaurants in our area hiring at \$15 and some are offering a hiring bonus. The responsibilities of taking care of an individual with developmental disabilities is very different from a fast food worker including life saving training in our field.

The families that we serve depend on us to give their family member a safe place to go during the day and a hot meal to eat. Some of the individuals that we serve do not have the option of a hot meal at home. We are also taking our individuals out into the community to build relationships, volunteer, sight see things that they may not have had the chance to see and many more experiences. If we are not able to retain our staff due to funding, we won't be able to plan the trips out in the community. The individuals are also able to work with our vocational habilitation program. Some of the individuals are helping to support their families. Without Brookhill Center Industries, Inc. and our dedicated staff, their daily options would be limited.

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

Sally A. Sutter
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