

May 12, 2025

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member McNally, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of the phased elimination of subminimum wages and the expansion of community-based employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. As both a professional who has worked in this system—and as a parent—this issue is deeply personal to me.

My name is Jan Dougherty, and I am Co-President of Ohio APSE. I have worked in Ohio's disability system in various roles. I served as Director of Employment Services at a nonprofit organization, focusing solely on transitioning individuals out of sheltered workshops and into competitive employment. I also work at a county board of developmental disabilities, engaging with businesses, chambers of commerce, and other organizations to promote the hiring of people with disabilities. However, my most important role is being a mom to my son, Ryan.

My son, Ryan Dougherty, was offered a job in a segregated setting where he would have earned only \$3.00 to \$4.00 per hour under a subminimum wage certificate. If he had accepted, the system would have spent approximately \$27,300 annually on vocational habilitation services, along with an additional \$14,430 each year for transportation. Regardless of whether he worked one hour or five hours a day, the provider could still bill his Medicaid waiver. Overall, this arrangement would generate a total revenue of \$250,380 for providers in long-term services.

Ryan chose a different path. He secured a job in the general workforce, earning over \$15.00 an hour. Over the past six years, this has resulted in direct savings of \$250,380—\$86,580 in transportation costs and \$163,800 in service expenditures. More importantly, it has significantly improved Ryan's quality of life, giving him greater independence, financial stability, and the pride that comes with meaningful work—benefiting not only him, but our broader economy as well.

Yes, there are individuals with disabilities who are employed in the community and use their Medicaid-funded budgets, particularly for transportation and follow-along job coaching services. However, many of these individuals are independent in their roles and receive support directly from their employers, rather than relying heavily on ongoing Medicaid-funded services.

Ryan's journey spans both before and after the implementation of Ohio's Employment First initiative. I've seen firsthand how much stronger and more capable our system has become. Today's service system is better prepared than ever to support individuals with disabilities in the workforce. We have trained providers, modernized delivery service, and built real partnerships with employers across the state.

Some may argue that the system's infrastructure isn't ready, that businesses aren't hiring, or that the pace of change is too fast. Others go further, claiming that people with significant disabilities will lose choice or be left behind. But as someone who has worked within this system—and as a parent of a son once considered

“too disabled”—I know firsthand: Ohio is ready. The data from Ohio and other states that have implemented similar legislation confirms it, and real stories, like Ryan’s, bring that data to life.

The fundamental issue of choice is especially debated in the context of phasing out 14(c) certificates, which allow for the payment of subminimum wages. While choice is important, paying individuals at least the minimum wage should not be optional, it should be a right. Individuals and families have long exercised choices in where and how they work, along with how they spend their day, but the conversation now increasingly centers on ensuring that all work, regardless of setting, upholds basic labor rights, including fair wages.

House Bill 225 represents a thoughtful, phased, and responsible approach to improving employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It ensures individuals have the freedom to choose how they spend their day, while receiving the necessary support every step of the way. By starting with those most prepared, employers and service providers will be able to build capacity and create momentum for lasting, meaningful change.

Eliminating subminimum wages is not only sound policy—it is a matter of dignity, inclusion, and economic fairness. I urge you to support House Bill 225 and help create a future where every Ohioan, including my son, is valued and fairly compensated for their work

Thank you Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member McNally, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee for your attention to this important legislation.

Jan Dougherty

Ohio APSE/Family Member

**Ryan's Medicaid budget, if he was authorized for Vocational Habilitation Services and NMT Transportation Services, based on data provided by the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities.**

Vocational Habilitation Services	Calculation / Details	Rate / Units	Total (\$)
Vocational Habilitation Services			
Daily Rate for Vocational Habilitation		\$105/day	
Number of Days per Year	5 days/week × 52 weeks	260 days	
Total Cost for Vocational Habilitation			\$27,300.00
Non-Medical Transportation (NMT)	Trips	Rate	Total(s)
NMT Rate		\$27.75	
Number of Trips Per Day	2 Trips Per Day		
Number of Trips Per Year	520 Trips		
Total NMT Cost for the Span Year			\$14,430.00
Total Medicaid Funding Available to the provider (Habilitation + NMT)	Sum of above totals		<b>\$41,730.00</b>

