

HB225
Sue and Micah Hetrick
Proponent Testimony
House Commerce and Labor Committee
May 19th, 2025

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

I am Sue Hetrick, and I am testifying in support of HB225 and Fair Pay for People with Disabilities

Today I am joined by my son, Micah.

Hello! I am Micah Hetrick. I'm 36 years old and a graduate of Dublin Scioto High School, I love to watch sports and most of all the Ohio State Buckeyes! I love music and movies! I love to spend time with my friends and family!

I also have a part time job at the Homage Retail Store at Easton Town Center. I have been with Homage for five years now and make \$13.75 an hour. I like my job because it lets me interact with all kinds of people. I help Homage by greeting our customers and making them feel welcome and appreciated! It is my special talent! Last summer I had a medical emergency which broke both of my hips. Homage kept my job open for a few months until I could return to work.

I am here to tell you that all people can work with the right support.

As a parent and as a professional in disability work for 35 years I couldn't agree more with Micah. From his earliest years we have been told that Micah couldn't do this or that and for the most part he has proven people wrong. In High School Micah began working with the state Vocational Rehabilitation agency, which was then called Rehabilitation Services Commission and is now Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Micah tried a summer work experience. When it concluded and it was time to reconvene to review with his VR Counselor we were told that Micah was UNEMPLOYABLE and that his case was being closed. I can't tell you what a gut-punch that was! Obviously they were wrong! I can tell you that because his summer placement was wrong and the support he received was wrong he was not successful. And that scenario repeated many times throughout the ensuing years. He was successful at several jobs however, when the placement AND support was right!

A non-verbal child with Cerebral Palsy whose family I supported in IEP meetings had been identified with an extremely low IQ and placed in classrooms for the seemingly lowest functioning students. We discovered that no one had explored or supported her ability to communicate with technology. Once that was in place her IQ *magically* rose and she was able to be part of education equal to that of her peers.

I met a man last week who is the parent of a young adult son with autism. His son is non-verbal. He beamed with pride as he told me that he only recently learned that his son could write!

Low expectations are the killer of dreams and self-esteem! Nationally recognized employment specialists will tell you that anyone can be employed. Those professionals include Dale Dileo who authored the book *Raymond's Room: Ending the Segregation of People with Disabilities*, Marc Gold and Associates, experts in customized and supported employment and community access and Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA), an award-winning, internationally recognized pioneer in the field of customized employment services for people with disabilities. In fact Griffin-Hammis has been consulting throughout Ohio for many years!

People with disabilities should not be denied the dignity of work, work that reflects their talents and interests that comes with the right support. And dignity that includes a fair wage.

Julie Taylor is joining us today as a professional employed by Griffin-Hammis. She will provide additional testimony in support of this position.