



Testimony on SFY 26/27 Operating Budget House Health Committee

Chairwoman Schmidt, Vice-Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and esteemed committee members,

My name is Kristen Campagnano and I am the Community Employment Manager for United Disability Services. We are located in Akron, Ohio and the program I oversee serves 6 counties (Cuyahoga, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne). We are an organization that provides day and vocational habilitation services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). We also provide employment and vocational training through Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), through our Community Employment Services, the program that I manage. Our Community Employment Services team of four (4) full-time and three (3) part-time employees are proud to provide essential services to an average of 196 Ohioans each year with a variety of disabilities, including intellectual, physical, hearing, vision and mental health.

First, I want to express our deep gratitude for the investment in disability and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in the last state budget. Your support allowed Ohioans with disabilities access and resources to find, keep and succeed at meaningful jobs in their communities. I think of Vivica and Johnny* (not real names), both in their 20s and both with significant mental health issues and numerous hospitalizations that had prevented them from being able to attempt work previously who are now both successfully working in retail for 21 months and 6 months respectively. I think of Maria* in her 20s with autism who is now working as a medical laboratory technician and Reba* in her 30s with hearing and mobility impairments along with mental health issues, who is working as a registered nurse. Both have been employed full-time in major hospital systems for 11 months and 8 months respectively. They are just a few of many who we have helped become successfully employed in the last year. I think of the many high school students with developmental disabilities that we work with to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and youth work experiences to prepare them to be successfully employed when they leave high school.

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of the budget initiatives proposed by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) as outlined in House Bill 96. These initiatives help ensure that all Ohioans have access to the resources and opportunities to be successful in the workforce and their chosen careers. The budget proposal also supports accessibility initiatives, internship opportunities, and state partnerships that help Ohioans with disabilities live, work and thrive in their communities.

The work that UDS's Community Employment Services performs is essential for maximizing the potential of our residents with disabilities and promoting their inclusion in the workforce and society. These services address the myriad of obstacles they face in preparing to transition in to the workforce, culminating in them obtaining and maintaining employment. The work that our Community Employment staff performs also helps employers to address their hiring needs and assists them with improving workplace accessibility.

The budget initiatives for Ohioans with developmental and other disabilities, guided by the leadership of Director Miller, will reinforce and strengthen the services provided by United Disability Services. **We encourage this committee to support the OOD budget proposal as outlined in HB 96.**

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 testimony before you today.**



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