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## Testimony on SFY 26/27 Operating Budget House Health Committee

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

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

My name is Ashley Brocious and I am the CEO of RT Industries. We are headquartered in Troy, OH and serve Miami, Darke, Preble, Montgomery, Clark, Champaign, Shelby and Auglaize Counties. We provide adult day, transportation and employment services administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of eighty-seven (87) employees are proud to provide essential services to over 350 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities each year.

First, I want to express our deep gratitude for the historic investment in disability services in the last state budget. The funding increase helped providers like us recover from a decade-long crisis that led to devastating workforce shortages. Thanks to your support, we have been able to:

- Decrease vacancies from five (5) open positions to zero (0) open positions, improving access to care for individuals with disabilities as well as additional DSP positions.
- Reduce turnover from 51.6% to 18% in 2024, stabilizing our workforce and improving continuity of care.
- Increasing number of applicants for open positions 1000% (10 times more), allowing us to fill critical positions and provide more reliable services to include more qualified candidates.
- Expanded services to neighboring counties and increased the number of enrollees by 200% as we previously had to turn away due to staffing shortages.
- Implement quality measures, such as:
  - Adding five (5) drivers for routes to eliminate the barrier of having DSP's juggle the daily responsibilities of driving routes and preparing for services,
  - Increasing Staff Development days for training and discussions,

*Helping people achieve personal success by developing skills to confidently work, interact and thrive in the community.*

*~ Safety ~ Collaboration ~ Camaraderie ~ Growth ~ Integrity ~ Excellence ~ Innovation ~*



- Ability to have DSPs attend external trainings and conferences,
- Hiring a sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) driver in 2025,
- Being involved with the ADS Pilot & Employment Pilot Program, allowing us to be highlighted in the DODD April 2024 Technology Newsletter, and
- Adding an additional supervisor position.
- Increase wages, with our current average Direct Support Professional wage at \$20.97 per hour.

I want to express my appreciation to Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for honoring the commitment made in the last General Assembly by using General Revenue Funds (GRF) to maintain the rate increases that were funded in part with ARPA dollars. This investment provides much-needed stability for providers and the people they serve. However, the budget does not include any additional funding to further boost DSP wages, despite the continued workforce crisis and rising costs. The last rate increase took effect in July 2024, and without action from this body, providers face a nearly four-year gap in rate adjustments—putting us right back in the crisis we just emerged from.

To ensure Ohioans with disabilities and their families have access to the care they need, **we urge the General Assembly to:**

- 1. Maintain the Governor's investment** in ICFs, Multi-System Youth, and Technology First initiatives.
- 2. Include a rate increase for waiver providers** to keep up with inflation and workforce demands.
- 3. Establish a mechanism for ongoing increases** to prevent future funding crises.

Investing in DD services is not just about providers—it's about ensuring Ohioans with disabilities receive the care and support they need to live full, independent lives in their communities. We look forward to working with you to build on the progress you've made and keep Ohio moving forward.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Brocious', written in a cursive style.

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