



**Testimony on SFY 24/25 Operating Budget
House Finance Health and Human Services Sub-Committee**

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and esteemed committee members,

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

My name is Amanda Smith, and I am the Chief Services Officer of ARC Industries, Inc. in Columbus, Ohio. ARC currently provides services to individuals who reside in Franklin, Delaware, and Pickaway Counties. We are an organization that provides Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services funded by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) for approximately 100 Ohioans annually, with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our entire organization employs 220 staff members. Approximately 10 of these employees provide VR services through OOD.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Miller for Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including job coaches, threatens our ability to achieve our mission of helping people with disabilities find great jobs in their communities. These budget initiatives, and the leadership of Director Miller, will support us to recruit and retain the staff needed to continue to provide vital employment services to Ohioans with Developmental Disabilities. Attached are two examples of the great work ARC's employment staff accomplished within the last year, through services and funding from OOD.

At ARC, we provide Project SEARCH, Summer Youth, Bridge Support Services, Job Development and On the Job Support Training through OOD. In addition, we provide Community Based Assessments and Career Exploration services to assist individuals with disabilities with obtaining competitive employment.

Over the last few years, due to limited rate increases, ARC has been challenged with remaining competitive with other labor markets. This has affected our ability to recruit and/or retain professional vocational rehabilitation staff. This has also impacted our ability to accept new service referrals from OOD and/or to provide services to individuals in a timely manner. In addition, our inability to retain qualified employees has impacted our ability to provide continuity of vocational services for individuals referred to our organization from OOD.

We encourage the General Assembly to approve the Governor's budget proposal for OOD.

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.

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Career Services Success Story – Josiah S.

In 2021, Josiah S. was referred to ARC by OOD to receive services at DHL through Project SEARCH. During Project SEARCH, Josiah experienced medical issues that impacted his stamina. ARC’s Career Services team quickly worked to develop a new externship opportunity at Green Garden for Josiah to accommodate his health needs. With support from his assigned ARC Employment Support Professional, Josiah was able to successfully complete his externship in April 2022. Upon completion of the externship, Josiah was offered a full-time position of employment at Green Garden at a starting pay rate of \$13.00/hour. Josiah accepted the position at Green Garden in May 2022 due to the relationships he developed there during his externship, along with opportunities for career advancement. Within 30 days of receiving On the Job Supports, Josiah was able to successfully transition to Follow Along Services in June 2022. In September 2022, Josiah performed his role so well at Green Garden that he was enrolled in a Supervisor Training Program to advance to a position as Warehouse Line Lead, where he will now be responsible, upon completion of the program, for managing the workflow of his assigned area.



Josiah receives his Project SEARCH graduation certificate with an ARC Employment Support Professional.



Career Services Success Story- Adam B.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives and careers of many people in central Ohio and across the country. Unfortunately, Adam B. was one of those individuals affected. Adam previously worked in production at ARC North when it was still a sheltered workshop. In 2015, Adam decided he wanted to work in the community, so ARC assisted him in finding a job at Panera. Adam thrived in that position. However, when indoor dining was temporarily halted in 2020, Panera had no choice but to lay Adam off. He was crushed as he loved his job, both for the income and the value of being part of a team.

As society opened back up, Adam began to participate in the community activities he always enjoyed. He attended book club again and resumed his participation in Special Olympics sports. However, due to multiple factors, Adam's career stayed on hold.

In the Fall of 2021, Adam joined the ARC Industries PACE (Path Advancement to Competitive Employment) program to transition back into the community workforce. The PACE program helped Adam sharpen his professional skills such as interviewing, selecting professional attire, and workplace social interactions that had grown rusty from lack of practice. When Adam felt ready to jump back into community employment, his case was re-opened with OOD and ARC's team in Career Services was prepared to help him find out what kind of work he wanted to do. Adam wanted to return to his position at Panera. The ARC Career Services member contacted Panera and was pleased to find that they wished for Adam to return and had an immediate opening.

In April 2022, Adam returned to Panera. Adam's ARC Employment Support Professional provided Adam the support he needed from day one. In addition, several regular customers remembered Adam from his previous time working there and welcomed him back to the restaurant.



Adam B. was happy to return to Panera. He is joined by his Employment Support Professional and a fellow Panera co-worker.