



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

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

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

My name is Theresa Brake and I am a Employment Discovery Specialist at RT Industries, and we are located in Troy Ohio, serving Miami, Shelby, Darke, Auglaize & Montgomery Counties. We are an organization that provides day, and employment services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of thirty (30) Direct Support Professionals are proud to provide essential services to over one hundred fifty (150) Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities each month.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine and Director Hauck for DODD. The changing labor landscape and accompanying shortage of workers, including direct support professionals (DSP), threatens our ability to provide the critical supports on which our the people we serve and their families rely.

With being a one income family, the wages I am offered at RT aren't enough to make ends meet. I enjoy my position and being able to be a part of someone growing as a person, so I don't want to look for other employment. It's exciting to see a person go through the employment support service that I provide and see them later get a job because of it. I have experienced several staff who have been hired and were still job searching for higher pay. They ended up leaving shortly after.

The persons I serve through group employment and vocational habilitation work very hard and try their best. They have goals they want to meet like everyone else. The services help build confidence and growth as a person. You can see when they achieve their goal and how proud they are of themselves. They don't stop there, though. They keep going. For example, I work with a person who used to be very shy and reserved. The person is now opening up more and doing things in their community. Their joy spreads to others!

Guardians and natural supports of persons served have shared they have seen the progress their loved ones have made. Without the services from providers like RT, persons would likely stay at home which can cause a decline in areas of their life. Stamina, mental health, abilities, and much more can be affected.

The Governor's proposed budget initiatives, guided by the leadership of Director Hauck, is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by RT Industries. We encourage this subcommittee to approve the Governor's budget proposal for DODD and to invest additional dollars into these vital services to raise direct support professional wages to at least an average of \$20.64. This investment will help us recruit and retain the workforce needed to continue to provide our quality services.

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

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





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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