

## Senate Finance Committee

Testimony of Bryan Casey, Owner & Home Operator of Alternative Living Solutions, Inc  
May 25, 2023

Chairman Dolan, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, my name is Bryan Casey, President of Alternative Living Solutions based in Athens County Ohio. I am the owner and operator of several facilities located in Clermont, Adams, Holmes, and Trumbull Counties. We currently provide services to 70 clients who are participants of the RSS program.

Many clients we serve have underlying mental health diagnosis. Many of our clients are probated to our facilities in lieu of jail for minor, nonviolent offences or transferred to us from one of the State Hospital facilities.

Our facilities are known for and recommended by at least a dozen county Mental Health Boards because of the programming that my team has developed over the last 15 years. I am blessed beyond measure to have this team and amazed at their dedication. They have dedicated most of their lives to caring for clients with mental health issues. Collectively my leaders bring over 100 years of expertise to the field – Brenda Cain in Clermont County with 35 years, Vickie Sizemore with 20 years. Jeni Asher in Adams County with 15 years and Mel Seevers in Holmes County with 30 years.

As a home operator, my two largest cost centers are wages and food. These two cost centers comprise 70% of my costs. The RSS program has not seen an increase in funding in the last seven years. During that time, minimum wage has increased 24.75%, with my staff's specific wages increasing 50% during this time. We simply are not able to hire folks at minimum wage, our average staff member makes 14.50 per hour. Additionally, according to the US Inflation Calculator, the cost of groceries has increased 33.3% during that same time.

We have had to place a hold on accepting RSS clients at a few of my homes because of the financial strain that caring for this population with such an inadequate reimbursement rate has cause. At the same time, we have prospective clients approach us daily wanting and needing assistance. We have County Boards reaching out for assistance. We have court systems reaching out for assistance. Each of these groups, most notably the client, is impacted by our inability to continue to admit clients under the RSS program.

The Governor had acknowledged and proposed a funding increase to the RSS program. The House in its process removed those funds. Our request, our plea is simple, please restore the funding to the RSS program to the \$1600 per month the Governor proposed. This will ensure our ability to continue to provide services to this vulnerable population and avoid unnecessary homelessness or criminal justice solutions to these issues.