



**Testimony on HB 33
Senate Finance Committee**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and esteemed committee members,

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

My name is Bob Gaston, I am the CEO of ARC Industries, Inc. We are located in Columbus, and we serve individuals in multiple counties across Central Ohio. ARC Industries provides adult day services, vocational training, career services and nonmedical transportation services through the home and community-based waiver program administered by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). Our team of two hundred and twenty-five (225) full-time and eight (8) part-time employees are proud to provide essential services to over one thousand one hundred (1,100) Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I am very supportive of the budget initiatives outlined by Governor DeWine, Director Hauck for DODD and Director Kevin Miller for OOD and very appreciative of the additional investments adopted by the House of Representatives in House Bill 33.

These past three years have been incredibly challenging for our agency. Many of our tenured staff have retired, and others left during the pandemic. We are spending a great deal of time trying to recruit and retain new staff members to join our organization to fill several open positions. Trying to compete with other employers in Central Ohio that are paying significantly higher wages has been quite frustrating and has not been met with much success.

We currently have a waiting list of over one hundred and fifty (150) individuals wishing to return to our adult day service programs but are unable to do so because we cannot fill open positions, particularly our Direct Support Professional (DSP) roles. Individuals and their families refrained from attending our day programs during the pandemic for safety concerns and now desperately need to reconnect with services in order to return their lives to some sense of normalcy. In addition, due to our staffing shortage we are not able to accept new referrals in all of our service areas although the need for these services is tremendous.

House Bill 33 as passed by the House is a great foundation to reinforce and rebuild the services provided by ARC Industries. We encourage this committee to support the House's version of H.B. 33 as it pertains to DODD appropriations. Further, we encourage the Senate 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.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Gaston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Gaston".

Bob Gaston, CEO

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'Supporting and empowering persons with disabilities to achieve their life goals'

