

## Testimony before the House Finance Sub-Committee on Health and Human Services

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Lisa Reed. I am the Executive Director of a non-profit organization, Residential Home for the Developmentally Disabled, Inc. We assist adults and children in Southeastern Ohio who have a developmental disability so that they may live and thrive in their communities.

I am here today to request that the Ohio House of Representatives fully fund HB 49 *as introduced* in the Governors developmental disabilities budget. As the Chair of the OPRA Workforce Crisis Committee, I see how provider agencies throughout the State of Ohio are struggling to provide a living wage for their Direct Support Professional staff; DSP. DSP's are the front line professionals who perform intimate and necessary tasks that make it possible for a person with a developmental disability to live as you do and as I do, with dignity.

I started my career as a Direct Support Professional 28 years ago. I was single, with no dependents and had to work a full time job in addition to my full time job as a DSP just to be able to pay the rent and buy groceries. 28 years later, wages have barely improved for the DSP. I see people struggling to support themselves and many others to support a family on the wages they make as a DSP.

The level of training that is necessary to become as DSP is extraordinary. You must complete 14 hours of Medication Administration training. There are 4 additional hours for Insulin administration then 4 more hours to learn how to safely administer meds and nutrition via a G tube or J tube. There are 3 hours for First aid and CPR; 14 hours for Crisis intervention; 30 hours for PATHS and many other individual specific training hours that are critical to safely serve the person with IDD. When you add that up, a DSP will receive nearly 100 hours of initial training then on-going instruction to maintain their certification.

That's a commitment. A commitment made by the employee as well as the Provider to promote longevity and consistency for the people we serve.

However, with recent increases to the Federal minimum wage, agency providers have come to the disheartening realization that we are in competition with fast food vendors and retail agencies when marketing for our staff. DSP's know that their wages are in league with wages earned by high school students who work weekends at McDonalds for extra spending money. Direct Support professionals work at the same level of skill as Certified Nursing assistant, and in many cases as a Licensed Practical Nurse, but they are paid fast food wages. This has *got* to change.

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LPN's and CNA's are well known, well respected and well-funded. Our DSP's work at the same level of skill, and carry the same level of responsibility but receive pay at the level of a fast food worker. This standard should not be acceptable. The standard should be, quality of life is important for the people we serve and also for the people who support them.

The work performed by DSP's is critical; it is important. And those 2 facts should be reflected in the wage they earn.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

Lisa Reed

