

Thank you Mr.Chairman Hacket, Ranking Member Thomas and Committee members for having me here today.

My name is Jan Dougherty. I am a parent whose son, Ryan, receives services from DSP's {Direct Support Professionals} in Stark County.

I am here today to share with you our experience and the impact the DSP's have had on our son to live and work in the community, though Ryan's story is one of thousand's across Ohio. Throughout Ryan's life, we have always believed that he would live and work in the community like you and I. Though there have been many challenges and disappointments, there has been one constant that we wanted to rely, the DSP's who provided the necessary supports for Ryan to accomplish his goals. However, over time, Ryan starting feeling the deep effects of the DSP crisis. As it worsened, we began to experience a revolving front door of DSP's. We understand what was happening in the system, but it left us wondering what will the future look like for Ryan? Will all his hard work be for naught?

Ryan entered a vocational training program at Aultman Hospital and spent four years learning the necessary job skills to become employed. Because of Ryan's hard work, perseverance and never giving up, the employees of the Environmental Services Department went to bat for Ryan to become an employee of Aultman. Ryan goes around the hospital collecting the sharps and taking them to the lower level and burning them in an incinerator. Ryan also runs a compact machine and completes various other job duties throughout the hospital.

For many who told Ryan he wasn't capable of employment, his success probably comes as shock, but for Ryan its just him doing what he knows best, getting up each morning, putting on his uniform and going to work at Aultman Hospital.

For Ryan to continue to be successful at work, he relies heavily on the strong support by DSP's. They assist Ryan with the required online training by reading the materials to him so he can take the post test. They assist him in changing his password so that he can retrieve his paystubs, they provide support to his coworkers to teach Ryan new tasks. These are just a few of the supports they provide.

The many people who have supported Ryan throughout the years, earn far less than Ryan. Ryan earns \$13.31/hours. I am not saying that people with disabilities should not earn a living wage, quite the opposite, but there is something drastically wrong, when the very people who are so overly needed yet undervalued in terms of wages.

Lastly, I would like to address is transportation

Over the past six years, we have transported Ryan to and from work. We leave the house by 6:20 to get him to work by 7:00. We have transported on Thanksgiving, Christmas, Fourth of July and many other holidays. We also have transported him home after work. It has been very difficult to find a transportation provider due to the reimbursement rates. If I may, I'd like to ask, would you leave your home at 6:00 am and drive to our house, pick up Ryan by 6:20 to have him to work by 7:00? It is a 20-minute drive, over 10 miles. And, the only time you can bill is when Ryan is in the car. And you can only bill \$1.27/mile. Then you would repeat this in the afternoon. Would you do this? On Christmas, Thanksgiving, other holidays? Imagine if you have to drive further....

Getting people to and from work is vital for an Employment First state and the Executive Order signed by Governor DeWine, establishing Ohio as a Disability Inclusion State and Model Employer of Individuals with Disabilities. Getting people to access the full benefits of their their community requires a transportation structure that support this.

Getting people to integrated, competitive employment requires a non-medical transportation structure that supports this. The current Non-Medical transportation service structure is antiquated and does not support an Employment First State nor a Disability Inclusion State.

The current language in the bill suggest a special workgroup be convened to study the Non-Medical Transportation service in Ohio. The past year or so, the service system put together a cross section workgroup to study the Non- Medical Transportation service and came up with specific strategies to address the service. I strongly support these strategies and that we implement them along with the Non-Medical Transportation budget ask. There are many individuals who cannot utilize public transportation, such as my son, due to the nature of their disability, or the time of the day they have to start or end their job. They rely heavily on the Non-Medical Transportation service.

We cannot wait another year to get people to and from work and to access the full benefits of their community.

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