

Testimony on HB 33 (FY24-25 State Budget)
by Bill Adams, Board Member
Scioto County Board of DD
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Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, good morning.

My name is Bill Adams, and I live in Portsmouth, in Scioto County, and I am a board member for the Scioto County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Today, I would like to talk a little about the Direct Support Professional wages.

It is crucial for DSPs to receive higher pay for the important job that they do. When I was younger, all of my physical and emotional support had come from my family, just like most individuals growing up whether they have a disability or not.

The first time I came in contact with a DSP, I was living on campus on Shawnee State University, from which I'd obtained my bachelor degree in social sciences. I needed to have someone there from time to time to see that my physical needs were met. I needed assistance with eating my meals, and daily grooming activities, such as shaving.

I learned what DSPs did in the fall of 1999 when one came into my life and I have had DSP assistance in my life ever since. Direct Support Professionals are vital to families and for some individuals who require even more assistance than I do.

If both parents are in the workforce, for an example, they may need DSPs to take care of their child while they are out earning a living and providing for their family. Older children may need assistance of a DSP to assist them with getting out into the community and getting involved in community activities while their parents are at work.

Not only does this assist the parent, but the DSP is helping the child learn independence and other necessary skills that we all build during adolescence. I have utilized Direct Support Professionals in a variety of ways over the past 24 years.

I have had experienced both independent as well as agency providers assist me in providing supports. My wife and I currently receive DSP supports from an agency that delivers 24 hours a day. We are so grateful for them, for everything that they do to make our lives better.

As a matter of fact, we wouldn't be here today if it weren't for our dedicated staff. And I want to thank them. We literally couldn't make a life for ourselves without them providing the assistants that we require every single day, 24 hours a day.

DSPs assist us in being as independent as we possibly can. When a staff member misses a day of work, it doesn't just affect them, it also affects us. An example of this happens when a driver calls off on Sunday morning, leaving us unable to attend our church, of which I'm an elder, therefore if I'm not there, it puts additional work on the other elders.

You would think that because of these very important services, the rate of DSPs would be high, at least as high as what they can make working in retail or fast food, but this isn't the case.

Our DSPs are not only paid supports, but they have become friends and sometimes more like family. The lack of a living wage promotes rapid turnover and when we don't have the opportunity to build these foundations with our staff, we lose our independence and quality of life.

We rely on these people for our basic everyday needs, without DSP's I don't want to even imagine where my wife and I would be.

The current rate of pay doesn't support retention in our field. In my personal experience, DSPs in our area are young adults who are just beginning their work life and they move along quickly when something better that pays better comes along.

We don't have experienced DSPs because they can't support a family on the current rate of pay. This is why I am here today, encouraging you to increase the rate of pay for Direct Support Professionals across the state of Ohio. Thank you for your time.