

Debi Donelan  
Testimony on HB 33  
Supporting the DD Workforce

I am the sister and guardian of Kathy, who lives in North Olmsted, OH. Kathy experiences intellectual disability, multiple mental health diagnoses, and health concerns. She lives in a condo with a roommate in what's called supported living. She relies on 24/7 care from Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

The crisis of the DSP shortage has greatly impacted Kathy's mental health and wellbeing. She becomes closely connected with many DSPs- they become almost like family, and the continuous turnover causes a grief and loss reaction each time another DSP leaves. She's not always able to express her grief, even though we try to help her process. As an example, we lost an incredible DSP this month, who left due to burnout and for a higher paying position. Just this morning, Kathy was crying and stated that she thought this caregiver had died. We reassured her that she was still alive, but it was heartbreaking to see how sad she was that this caregiver is no longer her staff.

The lack of adequate staffing is especially hard on the DSPs who are still working- many of them are working too many hours and getting burned out, which leads to more turnover. It's a vicious cycle.

Not only is the turnover hard on Kathy and her current staff, it's also hard on me as a family member. I am constantly needing to train new staff on all of Kathy's complex medical and mental health needs. This crisis impacts the quality of her overall care. And it impacts my wellbeing as I am anxious to lose any staff caregiver at a moment's notice.

Our family, and families like ours all over Ohio, need your help!

Please protect the health and safety of people with developmental disabilities by supporting a historic investment in service reimbursement, allowing providers to recruit and retain quality DSPs.