

Testimony on House Bill 33

By Stewart Jones, Ohio Self Determination Association

Senate Medicaid Committee

May 4, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Romanchuk, Vice chair Wilson, and Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee. For allowing me the opportunity to discuss the necessity of increasing the DSP wages in House Bill 33. I also have the privilege of being from Medina County and being represented by Sen. Romanchuk. I come to you on behalf of myself and the Ohio Self Determination Association.

I receive services through the SELF Waiver now and I was without any type of provider from March of 2020, but my case manager was able to find me a transportation provider in September of 2021. But he passed away in August of 2022. Luckily this February I was able to find a provider that is willing to drive 30 minutes to provide me services. When I received services through the I/O Waiver my provider was just as far as my current provider, but he had another client that lived in my area.

The fiscal provider changed to GT Independence in July of 2022. I'm glad it did because now I have more flexibility with providers. I started searching for a HPC and Transportation provider in September of 2022 using the GT Independence provider portal after they had taken over fiscal duties in July of 2022. However, I was unable to find a provider and I imagine a couple of reasons I had a hard time finding a provider was the cost of gas and insurance to transport someone they are working with.

I suffered a traumatic brain injury when I was 11 and was graced with some physical limitations. I depend on my provider Aysen for things you wouldn't give a second thought to doing. But for me the simple act of getting in and out of the shower, is something that I rely on Aysen for. Things like meal prep is something that I can do, but where I have tremors in both arms is made a little easier by having her assistance.

Though I'm lucky to have family and friends that assisted me, when I couldn't find a provider. However, society tends to forget how essential a provider can be to a person with a disability. For some their lives depend on the assistance that they receive from a provider.

I see the average rate in this budget goes to \$17 a hour starting 1/1/2024, then goes to an average of \$18 a hour starting 7/1/2024. I don't understand why it couldn't just start at \$18 a hour and have an average rate of \$20 a hour in this budget. I can understand why it's hard finding providers, when the payrate is split between two dates. These dedicated individuals tend to put their families on the back burner, to provide someone with a disability with the services they need to enjoy life.

I realize that this isn't up for discussion, but I feel that the mileage reimbursement should be looked at. I believe that if someone is coming from more than 20 minutes away, that the reimbursement rate should be greater because of the cost of gas and the maintenance that must be done to keep a vehicle functioning.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. I welcome any questions you have for me.