



**Written Testimony on FY24-25 State Budget (HB 33)**  
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**Submitted to the Senate Medicaid Committee**  
**Thursday, May 11, 2023**

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of Autism Speaks regarding Direct Support Professionals' wages in House Bill 33 (HB 33).

Autism Speaks is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families.

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication. An estimated 72,763 children and 203,999 adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) live in the state of Ohio.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are the backbone of the home and community-based services (HCBS) system for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including individuals on the spectrum. DSPs provide critical services and supports that help people with disabilities live full, meaningful lives in their community. The quality and effectiveness of a state's HCBS system is dependent upon a skilled DSP workforce.

Autism Speaks is supportive of the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal years 2024 and 2025, and appreciates the additional investments made by the House of Representatives in HB 33. However, the respective wage increases for DSPs do not go far enough in terms of addressing the current workforce crises. The rate of compensation has been identified as the number one barrier to hiring and retaining staff. To prevent providers from turning prospective clients away and potential closures due to inadequate staffing, the state must take immediate action to significantly increase DSP wages in the first year of the biennium.

Autism Speaks strongly urges the members of the Senate Medicaid Committee and the Ohio General Assembly to adopt a state budget that includes a \$20 per hour average wage for direct support professionals.