

My name is Jana Alo. I am 20 years old, and I live in Blacklick, Ohio. I am deafblind and have been using SSP services for about a year now. SSPs assist with transportation, mobility, and communication, but they also improve our physical and mental health.

Before I had SSP services, I really struggled with my mental health. I struggled to connect with others, and I felt very alone. Without vision, I could not recognize faces of people. Without hearing, I could not recognize the voices of people. That has changed with my SSP, Hannah. She helps me recognize others and she helps me communicate with them. She goes with me to my support groups. She helps me practice walking in unfamiliar areas with my guide dog. She also helps me run errands like picking up my medicine from the pharmacy, buying groceries, and depositing checks at the bank. My SSP helps get out in the world, both to achieve necessary aspects of life and to do the things I enjoy like getting coffee and walking with my dog.

With SSP services I can accomplish everyday tasks. Today, my SSP helped me get here to the statehouse, navigate the building, and helped me to communicate with others. With SSP services, I have more independence and autonomy, and that makes me feel like I can accomplish anything. In fact, I am in college, studying to become a psychologist. I want to help others who are struggling with their mental health like like I did.

We would like to share with the House Finance Committee the results of a research project conducted by Capital University. The research includes a Needs Assessment of DeafBlind Ohioans and an Assessment of the Columbus Speech and Hearing SSP Pilot Program. The research findings show that SSP Services improve the quality of life of DeafBlind Ohioans.

Many people who are deafblind are alone, isolated, and struggle with depression due to being stuck at home. But by giving us access and supporting us in doing basic life tasks and helping us in doing basic life tasks and helping us socialize, SSP's lift us up, bring us light, and help us feel more motivated, hopeful, and independent.

Please support more funding for DeafBlind services.

Thank you