

**Testimony on SFY 26/27 Operating Budget
House Health Committee**

Good morning, Chairwoman Schmidt, Vice-Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and committee members.

Thank you for letting me speak to you today.

My name is Alissa Hovis, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP). I work in Geauga and Trumbull County and provide services like transportation, in home services and community integration. I've been a DSP for 9 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling. I almost left the field entirely. I started looking for jobs at stores, or restaurants because they were offering more money than this field. I also had to work so much overtime that I didn't get to have a lot of alone time to decompress and spend with my family. It was stressful and exhausting. It caused a lot of burn out.

Since the pay increase, things started changing for the better. I was able to get health insurance through my job, I was able to cut back a little on overtime. This has made a real difference in my life and the lives of the people I support. Thank you for recognizing the importance of this work.

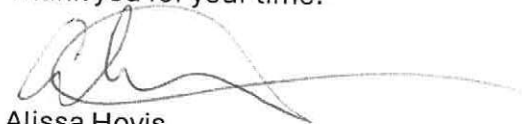
I'm concerned because the Governor's proposed budget doesn't include more money for DSPs working in waiver settings. Without action from you, we'll be right back where we started. We can't afford to lose more qualified, caring workers.

I ask you to:

- 1. Include a rate increase for DSPs in waiver settings.**
- 2. Create a system to regularly adjust pay so we don't face this crisis again.**

The people I support rely on me and other DSPs. We need to make sure this is a job people can afford to do, so we can continue providing quality care.

Thank you for your time.



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