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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 Chandra Thompson, and I am the Community Engagement & Operations Director of RT Industries. I work in Troy, Ohio and provide services like day/community integration, employment and transportation. I've been in this field for ten years and 2.5 years in my current position.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling. I had several staff come to me for assistance with accessing resources to help pay their rent, utilities, car repairs, food and childcare. We had a few staff resign and accept positions in the for profit industry, that were able to offer a higher/livable wage. The staff shared with us during their resignation that they loved their job but could not afford to stay and pay their bills.

Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. We no longer are faced with a staffing crisis. The need for employee assistance has decreased but still exists. Our turnover has decreased significantly. As an agency, we were able to give a significant increase, to help employees reach a livable wage. In turn, this affected the ability to add additional staff, service additional counties and serve more individuals with disabilities. This has made a real difference in the lives of our staff and the people we 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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*Helping people achieve personal success by developing skills
to confidently work, interact and thrive in the community.*

~ Safety ~ Collaboration ~ Camaraderie ~ Growth ~ Integrity ~ Excellence ~ Innovation ~

