

**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 Carla, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP). I work throughout Hamilton County, and I provide services such as daily living skills, community safety skills, personal care skills, community access skills, etc. to people with ID/DD. I have been a provider of these services as a DSP for 41 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling beyond belief. Our wage was similar to that of as a high school aged fast-food worker with the expectation to provide high level, high intensity, professional services to people with very complex needs. While I love the work that I do with people with ID/DD, I could not afford to pay my household expenses let alone buy a car I needed to ensure that I could get to work. Honestly, there have been many nights I have considered leaving the field altogether. When grocery stores and fast-food restaurants are paying more than a DSP, and the demands are far less; it has been a tough decision to remain working with the most vulnerable of people. The stress of this has been exhausting.

Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. I am now able to afford to put a bit of money aside for my retirement, but this has been too little, too late given my years of dedication to this field of work. While I uphold and maintain a high level of support and care for the individuals with whom I work, the same cannot be said for the DSPs in this field until this past year. While this was a great start, please know, it is just a beginning, and the trajectory needs to continue. Thank you for recognizing the importance of this work, my work.

I am very concerned because the Governor's proposed budget does not include more money for DSPs working in waiver settings. Without action from YOU, we will be right back where we started. We cannot 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.

Kindest Regards,
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