

**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 Hayley Swiger, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP). I work in Miami county at RT Industries that's located in Troy, OH and provide services like community integration with job development meetings, provide support on site once individuals obtain employment, and continuation of support through IES county services once major job skills are learned, but individuals still need some help to maintain employment. I've been a DSP for almost a year and a half.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling. I was only able to accept this position with the guarantee that a significant increase was coming on 1/1/24. I love working with and helping people, but I would not have been able to maintain and support myself and buy groceries on the previous pay I started at being a single income home.

Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. I was able to move into my own home, contribute more to my retirement, and not have to rely so much on overtime to make ends meet. 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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