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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 Bonnie Stockstill, and I'm an Employment Services Coordinator. I work in Troy, Ohio in Miami County and provide services like employability skills for students and adults. I was a Direct Support Professional for 16.5 years and have been a coordinator for 3.5 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs and myself were struggling. Many struggled to pay their bills on what they were making. I heard conversations of DSPs wanting to leave because they could go to McDonald's or Wal-Mart and make more money per hour. This was especially hard for DSPs who assisted individuals with finding employment. The DSP made significantly less money than the individual they were helping find employment, and a lot of work goes into assisting someone with this from the job search to the job coaching and retention to ensure a good job fit. As a supervisor before the increase, it was difficult to retain staff and affected quality of services. Individuals and their teams expressed great dislike for so many staff changes. It was stressful and exhausting for everyone.

Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. Staff retention has improved greatly and so has the quality of services. Being able to compensate staff for their hard work and dedication has also improved company morale. Staff can focus more on their work and not how they are going to pay bills or food. This has made a real difference in the lives of the people I support. It was like a weight was lifted. 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.

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to confidently work, interact and thrive in the community.*

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March 5, 2025
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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 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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