

## **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 Sarah Davies. I have worked within the Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) field for 23 years. I am a member of the Ohio Olmstead Taskforce and also on the Board of Directors for the Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals. But my most important title is that of “mom.” I am the proud mother of 5 amazing humans, my oldest, Evangeline, is disabled and has complex medical needs. Evangeline receives Home and Community Based (HCBS) services through one of Ohio’s Developmental Disabilities waivers. I’m here to talk about why it’s important to keep investing in these services and the people who provide them.

I want to first express gratitude. The increased funding in the last budget has given our family the ability to find and retain DSPs. As a single parent, having the support for Evangeline creates the ability to not only see to her many needs, but also allows me to see to the needs of my other children.

Evangeline was born with Down syndrome and autism, at 4 months old she developed infantile spasms. She lives with Type 1 Diabetes—uses a wheelchair, gtube, and tracheostomy. When she was born, her disability was simply a part of her. A part of the child I very much wanted, and I felt (and still feel) privileged to call her mine. As time went on, it became clear that she would need additional supports than what I was able to provide. I don’t know if you’ve ever had the realization that you weren’t enough for your own child, that your ability only extended so far, and that it was time to seek out help, but let me tell you...it is a humbling experience.

Luckily for me, I knew about Home and Community Based Services. I knew about my local county board of developmental disabilities. I was able to connect with the I/DD system here in Ohio. Evangeline is 11 years old, she may not communicate verbally, but she has 11 years of lived experience that matters. She belongs with her family and in her community. Supporting the Governor’s proposed budget to support people with I/DD and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, allows Evangeline to remain in her home, with her family, and in her community. I take my role of mother seriously. I want my child to remain with her family, I want her to live a life of happiness, and I want her to thrive.

I’m here today to ask you to support the proposed budget. Additionally, I would ask you to go further and support additional funds for the Direct Support Professionals working in Waiver settings. Keeping consistent, competent people in Evangeline’s life is a matter of

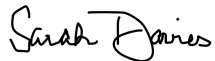
life and death. Without increase, we could be back to where we were prior to the last budget.

I'm an annoyingly proud person, but there is no amount of begging I would not do to ensure that my child is able to live a full life, regardless of how short or long that is. I will happily shred every bit of my dignity for her to keep hers. So, here I am in front of you, asking that you include a rate increase for the DSPs and create a system to regularly adjust pay.

People with disabilities belong in our communities, not warehoused away out of sight. They deserve the same rights as any other Ohioan.

HCBS Waiver Services are essential for Evangeline, and many others with disabilities. Having quality DSPs not only allows my daughter to survive, it allows her to thrive.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Davies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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