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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 Karie Furman, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP). I work in Miami and surrounding counties, providing employment services such as job searching, interviewing and competitive community employment. I've been a DSP for a total of four (4) years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling. Even though I had found my dream job, it was tough to pay bills and have basic needs, due to the lower wage. I was forced to look for higher paying employment, even though it was emotional leaving what I felt was the perfect job for me. I kept in contact with my director after leaving, to maintain awareness of the wages in hopes to be able to return to RT. After all, it was my dream job. Eventually the director of RT called and it was like my dreams came true. She told me there would be a pay increase coming and it was for sure. I immediately applied and joyously accepted to return to RT. Nothing in the world compares to the work I do with RT. I am grateful for the pay increase so I can continue to work with the amazing population we serve and still maintain my own household needs.

Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. I was able to get a reliable car that I can afford to make payments without worrying I won't have enough money. I have been able to start saving for retirement. Many people start that at a younger age. I didn't have that opportunity, but now I do. 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.**

Helping people achieve personal success by developing skills to confidently work, interact and thrive in the community.

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



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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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