



Creating pathways for individuals with disabilities to engage in the community, achieve greater independence, and attain employment.

March 5, 2025

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 the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Deyza Williams, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at VGS in Cleveland. My job includes providing services like job training, community engagement opportunities, and basic skills building. I have been a DSP for 10 years.

I care very much about my job and the individuals I work with.

Before the last budget's pay increase, many DSPs were struggling financially - it was stressful and exhausting. Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. It 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. It is important that this is a job we are paid fairly to do, so we can continue providing quality care.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

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