

Testimony on HB 96 (FY26-27 State Budget)
by Ryan Stephan
Resident of Richland County
4/29/2025



Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee,

Hello, my name is Ryan Stephan. I am a constituent of Richland County, where I work at Richland Newhope Industries and receive support through the Richland County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Thank you very much for giving me the chance to testify today in support of House Bill 96.

I am here because I believe it is very important for you to hear from the people you represent. I want to share why Direct Support Professionals, or DSPs, are such a big and important part of my life. Without their help, it would be much harder for me to stay healthy, safe, and independent. DSPs deserve to be treated fairly and paid well for the work they do.

Direct Support Professionals help with important parts of everyday life. They help people get ready for the day, get to work, eat meals, and live more independently. They also give people the chance to be part of our communities, to meet new friends, to learn new skills, and to follow our goals. Thanks to my DSPs, I feel supported to live a life that I choose.

DSPs need to be paid enough to take care of themselves and their families. When DSPs are paid fairly, we can find and keep good staff who are kind and want to stay and grow with us and not leave for other jobs like fast food restaurants where sometimes the pay is better.

Since the last increase in DSP wages, I have seen real changes. My staff member was able to buy a more reliable car. That means I can now get out into the community more often. I get to go to more places and meet more people. It has also made it easier for me to get to work, which is very important to me.

With my DSP's help, I have been able to join groups like Project STIR and the Boy Scouts of America. These groups have helped me learn important skills like leadership, and how to work as a team. They also help me be more active in my community, which makes me feel proud and confident.

I want to thank this committee for raising DSP wages in the last budget. It has made a big difference in my life. I am asking you today to please continue to support DSPs in this budget as well. Because of the choices you make, people like me can keep moving forward and living independently.

Because of your help, I feel stronger, more confident, I am excited to keep growing, learning, and giving back to my community. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.