

**Testimony on SFY 26/27 Operating Budget
Senate Medicaid Committee**

Good morning, Chair Romanchuk, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and committee members.

Thank you for letting me speak to you today.

My name is Amy Yoder, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP). I work in Miami and provide services like transportation, community integration, and employment support. I've been a DSP for less than a year.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling. I have always wanted to help those in need, but due to the low compensation I was not able to work in this field and support my family. Once the last increase was established, I was able to obtain a career I love and able to help support my family. I believe that the work we do as DSP's is very important in improving the lives of those with disabilities. Without the proper pay increases we will continue to lose those people that are passionate about the incredibly important work we do. We as DSPs also must maintain an income that supports our family. Fair wage increases are the best way to keep DSPs for years to come to do the very important work we do.

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. 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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