



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

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

My name is Stefanie Sowry, and I'm a Direct Support Professional (DSP). I work in Troy Ohio and provide services like personal care, transportation, community integration, and coordinating services for both transportation and our adult day program. I've been a DSP for 15 years.

Before the last budget's pay increase, DSPs were struggling. The lack of funding increase was stressful and exhausting. Since the pay increase, things have changed for the better. The increase has been instrumental not only for staff to have a more livable wage, but it also ensures better care and services for individuals who receive Medicaid funded care. I struggled and had to work multiple jobs, and some months had to choose which bills we were going to pay and which ones we would wait for the shut off date. Which in turn causes more stress. We take care of people in their most delicate stages of life and we should be compensated properly for the work that we 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.**

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 and consideration with this.

*Stefanie Sowry*

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May X, 2025

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