

Hi Co-chairs and members of the committee, my name is Leanna Cleveland, and I'm a Direct Support Professional and caregiver for adults with developmental disabilities. I'm also an advocate, a mental health content creator, and someone who shows up every single day with my whole heart—because this work matters.

The DHS Wage & Rate study shows we're \$558 million behind in funding IDD services. That number is massive—but I can tell you firsthand, the gap is real. I see it when my coworkers are maxed out on overtime and still have to take second jobs just to survive. I see it when we're constantly trying to fill open shifts while already running on empty.

I work with people who rely on consistency, stability, and trusted relationships. When a familiar DSP is suddenly gone because they can't afford to stay, it's not just a staffing issue—it's a loss. It creates anxiety, confusion, and a sense of instability for the individuals we support.

I'm paid more than the state's reimbursement rate, and even that isn't enough. My agency is doing everything it can to support us—stretching every dollar, filling in gaps, and trying to hold the line. But no amount of heart can make up for a lack of resources. We don't need bandaids—we need bold investment.

As a mental health content creator, I talk about burnout and boundaries constantly. But those are luxuries many of us in this field don't have. We show up drained, we show up overwhelmed—and we keep showing up, because the people we support deserve nothing less.

But we could do so much more with real support. Imagine what's possible if we weren't just surviving—but thriving alongside the people we care for.

I'm asking you to prioritize IDD funding in the 2025–27 DHS budget. Start closing that \$558 million gap. Invest in this workforce, because when DSPs are supported, people with disabilities thrive. And that is the kind of future we should all be building together.