

Hi Co-chairs and members of the committee,

My name is Joey, I am a Direct Support Professional and advocate for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I also support the Be The Change Foundation, because like them I believe in being the change I would like to see and to have had. This profession is just that, being the change and empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

DSP's perform essential, demanding, and skilled work that takes a lot of mental and physical energy. With respect and gratitude toward any increase, the DHS Wage & Rate Study shows we're \$588 million behind in funding IDD services, the first time we have concrete amount showing the true funding gap. That number has detrimental consequences like high turnover, service disruptions, and reduced access for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Professionally and personally, I've seen what this does to those who rely on their DSP's and to the DSP's themselves. Without action and more delays, it puts these individuals at risk of losing essential services and support.

The IDD workforce cannot wait and needs immediate investment. So, I ask please on behalf of our individuals and DSP's do whatever you can to champion increased IDD funding to move us toward the goal of closing the gap and putting stability in our services and supports for all in this field. Please prioritize this in the 25-27 budget and be the change. Thank you.