



Our Voices Together Florida Coalition

October 15, 2019

More than 50,000 people with I/DD depend on Florida's Medicaid (iBudget) waiver system and need your support to maintain stable services. Over the past few years Florida's economy has flourished, ranking the 17th largest in the **world**, yet funding for IDD spending has been stagnant. Florida ranks 50th for funding I/DD services. The lack of adequate wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) results in high turnover and negatively impacts the quality of services provided.

I am the Chair of Our Voices Together, Florida Coalition (OVT) and am speaking on behalf of the thousands of vulnerable Voices that are greatly affected by the **direct support workforce crisis** Florida is in. We ask you to support increasing rates for Personal Supports, Respite and Adult Day Training services to provide improved wages for this dedicated and vital workforce. These services are not just a want, but a critical need for people with I/DD to be able to live their best lives. In order for us to make change, we need **your voice** at the table.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities depend on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to live successful, integrated lives in communities across the state. DSPs are the foundation of the community-based service delivery system and their low wages fail to compensate them for the highly skilled, complex and vital work that they do. Wages paid to DSPs are less than those paid to work at fast food restaurants and retail stores where they are able to earn more and work less. The true cost of this crisis can't be measured in dollars. Individuals deserve and need continuity of care – their capabilities are endless, but they need your support.

To stabilize the Direct Support Professional workforce, Florida must begin to bring wages in line with the vast responsibility and importance of the job. With that in mind, we respectfully ask for your support to raise wages for DSPs to \$12.00 an hour for Personal Supports, Respite and Adult Day Training services in the FY20 Budget.

People with I/DD are too often left in the dark on legislative decisions that ultimately impact their daily lives. You can help by making sure their voices are heard. **Please support rate increases for Personal Supports, Respite and Adult Day Training Services** in our sunshine state to allow people with I/DD to see the light again.

Thank you for making sure individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) VOICES are **HEARD** going into the 2020 session.

Beth Gulling

Our Voices Together Florida, Coalition

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