

UCP CENTRAL PA's POSITION ON GOVERNOR WOLF'S 2018 BUDGET PROPOSAL: A MESSAGE FROM
JUDITH MCCOWAN

As you should already be aware from our recent Advocacy Day effort, UCP, in partnership with the ID and Autism Coalition, has worked to organize a campaign to advocate for funding to address the wages of DSPs in Pennsylvania.

Governor Wolf released his proposed 2018-19 budget in an address to the joint Chambers on Tuesday, February 6, 2018. I am disappointed to report that it failed to address the DSP wage crisis in any way. The Governor did allocate some partial support to help reduce the emergency waiting list by 100 (ODP conservatively estimates this list to be at 800). The proposal also includes some funding to support 40 more individuals with autism, and to address the 800 graduating students scheduled to receive services during FY 18/19.

Unfortunately, NO funding was allocated to gradually increase DSP wages over the next five years.

UCP is grateful to the Wolf Administration for funding new services for a number of individuals and families who are desperately in need of services and supports. Many of those services, however, will be dependent upon provider agencies' ability to attract and retain DSPs -- a challenge due to low wages. I am disappointed that the Governor could not find a way to begin to address the crisis.

The campaign to leverage funding to increase DSP pay rates incrementally over the next five years MUST continue. Our next step will be to appeal to House and Senate leadership, as well as your rank and file Representatives and Senators. We will be asking legislators to add additional dollars to the budget to begin to address this crisis.

Success in advocating for the state's limited revenues, particularly when there is a deficit, is difficult to achieve. It takes nothing short of an epic campaign *over time* to ensure that our elected officials fully grasp the degree of this need – and just how many people the DSP crisis affects – including DSPs, families, and the wonderful people we work with. More than 7,000 people who care about this issue called the Governor's office in January to express their support for DSPs in Pennsylvania. This absolutely raised awareness regarding the importance of this issue.

The next thing that will happen in the budget process is that House and Senate Members will write their own versions of the state budget in the coming months. The House and Senate will then work to merge their respective budgets into a single budget that will be presented to the Governor for signature. Therefore, the only way to continue to effectively advocate at this point is through our state legislators.

I do not see this as a failure – I see it as a starting point in paving the path to DSP living wages in Pennsylvania. Let us be grateful for what we have. It takes time to develop energy around a public issue – and volume does matter. There are 8.4 million registered voters in our state. The extent to which we can generate mass public engagement around this issue will be a factor in the success of this campaign. PLEASE get everyone you know on board with you to help advocate for DSP living wages when the time comes.

I am asking you all to help us – get ready to go ALL IN for the long haul! *We will raise the roof on the Capitol, letting everyone know WE ARE HERE – and we vote!* As soon as my colleagues and I have formulated a definitive plan, I will issue a Call To Action. Until then, please continually raise this issue

with your family, friends and colleagues – let's be sure that we have as much energy around this funding issue as possible as we move on to the next step in this process. For my part, I promise to relentlessly fight for DSP wages until we win – however long that takes!

With love and blessings to you all,

Judith McCowan

President/CEO

UCP Central PA