



December 2016

**The Honorable Chris Christie
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, New Jersey 08625**

Dear Governor Christie,

The supportive and caring system that New Jersey is working so hard to build in order to provide critical care to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) is in crisis. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) - the most essential component of this system - are in short supply. Hiring and retaining qualified DSP's are becoming difficult for agencies, individuals with I/DD, and their families. The key factor causing the DSP workforce crisis is low wages.

Every day we entrust DSPs with the care of children and adults with I/DD throughout our communities - where they live and where they work, in day programs and recreational settings. DSPs are the backbone of our system, without them there are no services. Simply put, DSPs make life possible for people with I/DD.

As you celebrate with your family this holiday season, please keep in mind the DSPs that work tirelessly - 365 days a year - to support people with I/DD, by including a \$1.25 an hour increase in their wages in your FY 2018 budget. Our DSPs deserve a living wage and one that reflects the skill and responsibility that their work requires.

I appreciate everything you do to support people with I/DD.

Wishing you a warm and wonderful holiday,

I support the Coalition for a DSP Living Wage!

201-358-8000 • Spectrum for Living • 210 Rivervale Rd., River Vale NJ 07675 • mmichelson@spectrumforliving.org