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MEMORANDUM

TO: Service Providers, Families and Advocates

FROM: Beverly A. H. Buscemi, Ph.D. 
State Director

RE: DDSN FY 2017-2018 Budget Update

DATE: March 30, 2017

Tuesday evening the Senate Finance Committee finalized its budget plan for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The Finance Committee's version is very good for the DDSN service delivery system. The Committee appropriated \$9,000,000 in new recurring state funds to the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs to address workforce needs. Addressing workforce issues is the greatest need within our DDSN service delivery system today.

The generous appropriations of recent years to reduce waiting lists have helped thousands of people. However, direct care staffing is at a crisis level and we must be competitive in the job market. New or expanded services cannot be provided without a strong workforce. The potential of this new funding is a very important first step in a multi-year effort to increase the hiring wage for Direct Support Professionals to the \$12.00 to \$13.00 per hour range. A new appropriation of \$9 million supports moving toward that goal by increasing the hiring wage to \$11.00 per hour. This represents an 8.8 percent increase from the current \$10.11 per hour.

The Senate Finance Committee also approved funding to cover the increased cost of health insurance. There would be no increase in deductible and/or co-pays. No across the board pay increase was recommended.

The DDSN Commission and staff greatly appreciate the leadership and hard work that is required during the budget process. The Health and Human Services Subcommittee is led by Senator Thomas Alexander. Other subcommittee members include Senator Floyd Nicholson, Senator Danny Verdin and Senator Glenn Reese. The Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee is Senator Hugh Leatherman. The effort of these leaders ensured services for individuals with disabilities and their

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families remain a very high priority. Please take time to thank these senators for their outstanding support of DDSN and services provided across the state.

The budget now goes to the full Senate. Their deliberations are expected to begin April 4th. We will keep you informed as the budget moves through the legislative process. Thank you all for your continued work and advocacy on behalf of those we serve.

cc: DDSN Commission