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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: February 24, 2017

The Ways and Means Committee of the SC House of Representatives adopted its budget recommendation for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The Committee's budget is very good for the DDSN service delivery system. We are very pleased to report the Committee appropriated \$9,000,000 in recurring state funds to the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs to address workforce needs.

DDSN stakeholders – consumers, families, service providers, DDSN Commission and department staff – all agreed addressing workforce issues is the greatest need within our DDSN service delivery system at this time. 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.

Funding in the budget recommended by the Ways and Means Committee also assists employees as there is 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. Once again services for individuals with disabilities and their families were given a very high priority. Special appreciation and recognition are well deserved by Ways and Means

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Committee Chairman Brian White and the Health Subcommittee members, Rep. Murrell Smith, Chairman, Rep. Jimmy Bales, Rep. Bill Clyburn and Rep. Garry Smith. Please take time to thank these legislators and others for this outstanding support of DDSN and services provided across the state.

The South Carolina Partnership of Disabilities Organizations has set aside March 1, 2017, as South Carolina Community Engagement Day (formerly Disability Awareness Day). If you plan to attend activities at the State House, please express your appreciation and say "Thank You!" to legislators for their support and work to assist people with disabilities. DDSN commends all our State leaders for their steadfast support!

cc: DDSN Commission

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