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MEMORANDUM

TO: Service Providers, Families and Advocates

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beverly A. H. Buscemi Ph.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

RE: DDSN FY 2017-2018 Budget Update

DATE: April 11, 2017

Last Thursday the South Carolina Senate gave final passage to its state budget plan for Fiscal Year 2017-2018. The Senate's version is very good for the DDSN service delivery system as it appropriates \$9,000,000 in new recurring state funds to the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs to address workforce needs. The Senate budget plan also provides \$500,000 to the Greenwood Genetic Center.

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 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 Senate budget includes a potential bonus to permanent state employees in full-time positions up to \$500 for qualifying employees earning \$50,000 or less. The possible bonus is entirely dependent upon surplus funds being available based on the Comptroller General's certification which usually occurs in August.

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The potential bonus would only apply to qualifying state employees. It does not include employees of DDSN's provider network, local aging agencies, local alcohol and drug abuse agencies and other groups. The House budget does not include a potential bonus. The bonus and other differences between the House and Senate versions of the budget bill are yet to be worked out by a conference committee. We will keep you informed.

The DDSN Commission and staff greatly appreciate the leadership and hard work that is required during the budget process. The efforts of many legislators ensured services for individuals with disabilities and their families remain a very high priority in the budget plan for FY 2017-2018. Please take time to thank your Senator and your Representative for his/her outstanding support of DDSN and services provided across the state. Thank you all for your continued work and advocacy on behalf of those we serve.

cc: DDSN Commission