Good day, Chairperson Downey and members of the Assembly Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of ABCD and in support of A4988 which would establish the New Jersey Direct Support Professional Core Competency Working Group.

ABCD agrees with the bill’s sponsors that core competencies should be reviewed on a statewide level in order to underpin the continuous evaluation, revision and development by provider agencies of their training in the skill sets required of their DSP workforce.

A few reflections:

- It is imperative that all stakeholders have a place at the table. To be effective, the participatory body must include those who are aware of the needs and problems and those who know how to implement the solutions into everyday operations. I’m sure we all agree that the working group must strike the right balance.

- The IDD population is heterogeneous. Individuals require different levels and types of support, assistance, and care, hence, agencies must specialize to meet each individual’s requirements. The working group must account for the possibility that not all competencies or levels of competencies are applicable in every situation.

- Many agencies have professional staff who are singularly responsible for employee training and development. These professionals are charged with implementing training which will meet the requisite needs of the people the agency serves and of the agency which serves them. But not all trainings are the same; the best trainings take into account all that is necessary to maximize the learning of required skills by a specific audience. Provided that they meet the required outcome standards, agencies must be given the flexibility to create trainings that work for their system of care.

- A compilation of the skills trainings that ABCD members provide their DSP workforce has 14 trainings for orientation alone, for orientation and yearly trainings, 31, and biannually, 1 CPR/First Aid course. DSPs are a highly-skilled, low-wage workforce.