

This is Nancy, I work for Vocational Rehabilitation as a Counselor 2. I've been working for the State for nine years, going onto my tenth year, and this has been the most challenging time over the past two years. One is the financial hardships; I have two kids in college, and I'm trying to budget and get them through. I often get called back to my old job, which is \$10-15k more in Mass than it is in Maine, but I would rather stay working for Maine. But I'm really struggling. There are many staff that are leaving and we used to have 18-19 staff members. Now we're down to a staff of 8-9 people, but there aren't very many willing to work here because the salary is below what the average salary is for step one – it's way below \$50k. People are leaving, and it seems like my caseload has increased. It affects my health, my medical status, I'm having to pay more medical bills and pay for my hearing aids and whatnot. Because of the stress, it's impacting my health, so that's why we need additional funds to raise wages.