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Over the last 14 years I have watched our qualified workforce dwindle. This was extremely exacerbated during and since the pandemic. It has come down to retaining the current qualified staff we have! The State voted to make the minimum rate 120% of minimum wage and then left it out of the current budget. We are trying to keep skilled staff to provide supports to individuals in need at a rate at or below fast food chains. Currently we are losing support staff to jobs that require less qualifications and pay more. It's about paying a wage where people can afford to live, or almost. If we continue on the road we are on, the qualified workforce will continue to dwindle and the wait list for those who need these services will increase. With a higher rate, hopefully service providers can retain current staff and encourage others to join us in providing supports to those who need them.