



It's more than just an experiential community support program...it's a movement!

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on LD 878 (SP292).

My name is Scott Miller, and I am the Director and founder of Creative Trails, which is the Community Support (CS) program of Support Solutions. I have over 20+ years of experience working with adults with intellectual disabilities, 5 years as a DSP in different delivery services, 2 years as a residential manager, 1 year on a nationally recognized clinical team and 15 years as a director of Creative Trails CS program. **Creative Trails serves 200 participants** throughout 7 locations and 3 counties in Maine and pre-pandemic we employed over 40 DSP's. Now we are down to around 20 and need to rebuild.

It is imperative in order for the Community Support Industry to have adequately paid DSP's and a rate that will support that increase. The budget parameters that we work in, based on our waiver reimbursement rates from MaineCare, allow to just pay minimum wage or slightly above. Due to this it is extremely difficult to retain our incredible DSP's more than a year and a half. The state requires a minimum of 44hrs of paid trainings, which does not include the other 40+ hours of paid training to have the DSP as an active "live" staff.

Over the last decade we have started collecting some exit surveys from our DSP's and over 90% say they loved their job as a DSP but can't afford to stay. How could they be working for a little above minimum wage? They can't afford rent, car payments, healthy meals, school loans, to get married, to have a family or support a current family. These are professionals that have an important therapeutic/social role in our society.

For the Community Support industry to meet the upcoming HCBS Federal mandates staff are requiring more trainings, which is more costs. We are also looking at a proposed waiver reform with 21% and great cuts. How are we supposed to increase rates with more cuts?

In order for our state to provide quality services for the IDD community it is crucial to have a minimal rate increase of \$2 an hour. Our current rate is \$6.53 per 1/4 unit for a 1:3 avg staffing ratio. We need to get this rate at least \$8.53 with the same ratio methodology.

By increasing the rate will allow us to increase the DSP wage and retain staff longer, which will create better quality of services. Having better services for our participants will help give them skill sets and community ties that would lead to less services needed in the future, which will save the state a tremendous amount of funds in the big picture.

Sincerely,

Scott Miller

Creative Trails Director

207-671-2118

www.creativetrails.org

Scott Miller
SOUTH PORTLAND

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