

Written Testimony in Support of
**LD 1573 *An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study
Long-term Care Workforce Issues***

May 3, 2021

To: The Committee of Health and Human Services

From: Christina Ainsworth, Residential Coordinator, Woodfords Family Services

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Please accept this testimony in support of LD 1573: An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care Workforce Issues.

My name is Christina Ainsworth and I am a Residential Care Coordinator at Woodfords Family Services. I have worked as a direct support professional supporting adults with disabilities for 13 years and as a supervisor for 6 years.

It's extremely hard to stay in this field. As a supervisor, I know first-hand how hard it is to hire direct care staff. At Woodfords right now, we have 14 full-time openings in our Residential program. That represents 560 hours per week that need to be filled through overtime, which contributes to stress and burnout. Our turnover rate averages about 50%, meaning that we lose half of our workforce every year and struggle to hire.

This constant change in staff is extremely disruptive to the consumers in our care. They deserve to have consistent staff in their homes and people they can build long-term relationships with.

I believe the only way we can provide the high quality service adults with disabilities deserve is by paying an adequate wage. Direct care staff have very difficult jobs and we ask a lot of them.

Each day our DSP staff arrive and are expected to be present for people who require around the clock support. Support with tasks that range from assistance with bathing to maintaining safety in and out of the home. Staff are required to stay up-to-date on multiple trainings, meet documentation requirements, and follow consumer plans. We hold high expectations for our DSPs at Woodfords Family Services, which allows us to provide the best possible care to our consumers. It feels as though these expectations are

becoming unreasonable as their job is growing increasingly difficult and their rate of pay does not reflect the value of the job.

That is just it; the rate of pay does not reflect the value of the DSP job. The folks I work with are some of the best people on this planet, no one can tell me any different. I work with one guy that caused so much ruckus in the town he lives in, I talked with the local police department more than I did with my family. That same consumer is now thriving and well liked throughout the community. This would have not been possible without the dedicated DSP staff team that work with him.

COVID has only made this work more challenging. As a supervisor, I play a role in the interviewing process. Prior to COVID, supervisors were screening multiple applicants weekly & conducting interviews. Now, we will go weeks without holding an interview.

At Woodfords, we struggle to compete with other direct care opportunities and other industries, like retail. This bill, which would raise the pay rate for direct care staff to 125% of the minimum wage would go a long way in valuing the work we do and the people we care for. Please help us stabilize our workforce and provide the highest quality service we can.