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LD 1573 An Act to Implement the Recommendation of the Commission to study  
Long-Term Care Workforce Issues

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

The Commission to Study Long-Term Care Workforce Issues was a breath of fresh air for me. At the first meeting, I was wary since my experience with efforts to identify the importance of well trained and dedicated DSPs usually was watered down early on to eliminate staff taking care of those with autism and ID. For the first time, I saw this group of people included equally with others that need such Direct Services. For me, as the mother of a child that has been receiving services since she was 2 (she is now 54), it was wonderful to have people realizing these extreme needs. In fact, they seemed to believe in the growth that appropriate care and gentle respect can give. Although she will always bear the scars of less than appropriate understanding and care, she can now smile more often than ever before and has developed a pride in being part of a "team" rather than just someone needing to be served or ordered around.

It is not easy to deal with severe mental and emotional problems. Add in the complications of those who are unable to verbally explain what they are going through. The stress on the staff of handling behavioral incidents with these people is not easy. With homes that firmly encourage that yesterday is over and every day is a new day. it is not only difficult to do but also has amazing results... sometimes only eventually. My daughter is still stunned that a bad day does not mean she is treated differently in the next day or week. She is one of those with severe behaviors, and finding staff that seem to do all they can to avoid slippage, intervene calmly when needed, and not complain about her behavior later in front of her, has helped her to feel she may be able to "belong". The staff rejoices in the results but also has to carry the stress of keeping this delicate balance, day in and day out while also being alert to mitigating accidents caused by poor coordination and balance. Staff turnover is difficult with the new staff initially distrusted by my daughter, and tested by her to see if they can accept her, even at her worst. That's not easy for them, particularly since she can't speak.

Quality of life is important for all. That includes the staff. As I reach the age where I may need such services, I must say a friendly and understanding person when needed is indeed a blessing. Please realize and reward the exceptional people who take on such roles. It is not just "being nice." It is being constantly alert and sensitive to the needs of those who need such support through no fault of their own.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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