

Hello,

I am one of a Therapeutic Couple testifying about the LD 1573 bill. DSP's and caregivers have been working for many years at the same pay rate, minimum wage with little or no chance of promotion because of the requirements for management positions. Some people working in this field have the equivalent of a master's degrees, Research Scientists, Environmental Chemists, and many other positions that require degrees, yet they or I do not qualify for promotions in this current field, no matter our experience.

My point is I love doing what I do, caring for people who cannot care for themselves. This is a 24/7 lifestyle. The agency requirements for us to do this work are Continuous training, recertifications and following Federal, State, local and agency requirements. We are totally responsible for safety, physical and emotional care of the people we serve. Yet our average pay is lower than some one working at McDonald's or Walmart. This field has a very high turnover rate because people cannot live off the low pay. This causes instability and inconsistent care for the Consumers we serve.

DSPs cannot afford to go on vacations or respite because of the incredibly high cost of housing and food.

The real issue is the lack of understanding of skills, dedication, and perseverance it takes to do this kind of work. It cannot be taught in a classroom. The job is the classroom. There are intangible requirements that are ineffable. It takes years of experience. Every person you care for is unique with their own needs and desires. You must build trust which takes time. Think about how devastating it is for a Consumer to have built that trust only to have it taken away because their care giver had to leave because they could not pay their bills.

It would be more cost effective to pay DSPs a reasonable wage and provide raises and promotions based on experience then to constantly retrain people only to lose them too.

Robert LaPlante  
limerick

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