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Spurwink Adult Services

Written Testimony in Support of LD 1573
An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To Study Long-term Care
Workforce Issues
Health and Human Services Committee
Monday, May 3, 2021

Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Myer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide 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 Jennifer Wickes. My partner and I are therapeutic DSP house parents, which means we live 24/7, 365 days a year with our 3 adults with IDD. We do have respite available and have consistent staff who care for them when we are away. Our 3 clients have a variety of needs and those needs have changed as they age. We have been with them for 14 years and we hope to continue to stay in this position for as long as we can.

This is a tough job, as we tell people the years have been short but the days long. We wouldn't want to do anything else though because we have formed a bond built on trust, care, consistency and compassion. We have become a family esp for our one client who has no living relatives. We have become extended family to our clients families because we have shown that we are here for their loved one no matter what.

I always say good staff stay no matter what the hourly wage because they want to give the best lives they can to those we care for. BUT its sad and hard to work so hard and make less then those who aren't directly caring and helping give the best life to another human being. We as DSPs keep them safe, healthy and happy. We keep a close watch on their health and if needed advocate for the health care they need. We have stayed up all night to keep watch so they can stay at home where they feel the safest. When they must be hospitalized we have sat bed side so they wouldn't be too scared. We cheer them on when they work to learn a new skill. We research and find ways for them to enjoy the things they like to do even as their health changes. We help them heal from any past scars and to make fresh wonderful memories to replace the bad.

My biggest worry is that if funding doesn't rise with the cost of living than we will loose the staff that care so deeply and work so hard. My worry is that as staff who have been in the trenches for 10, 20, 30 years start to retire or are forced to move on to something that pays better that we will end up with staff shortages and poor quality staffing. How do you give these clients the best care if you don't have the man power to do it? And its not just the man power but quality that a living wage brings.

Our clients deserve to always have the best care. We as current and future DSPs deserve to be paid what we are worth. Non profit agencies deserve to have the funding they need to provide all of that and than some.

Thank you for your time.

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