

*Co-chair*

Honorable ~~committee chair~~ and honorable committee members,

I would like to take the time to thank everyone for being here and for taking the time to listen to us.

My name is Monica Schmale, I have worked for sunny oaks for 3 years and before sunny oaks I worked for Shangri LA for 4 years, both of which are non profit organizations working with and for the developmentally disabled. I'm a mother of 3 boys and a wife, my husband also has been in the Direct support position. I love what I do with all of my heart. The customers are everything to not only myself but to my husband and children as well. Doing this job has been hard for my entire family, we live paycheck to paycheck, we make to much to be on assistance but not enough to pay the electric bill or put nutritional meals on the table, let alone pay for our boys to play the sports that they love year round. Its getting to the point where I have to choose to stay at the job that I love, being stuck in this endless loop, and getting a job that I dont have the heart for just to be able to make a better life for my family, how is that fair? I have made the same wage for the last 2 years, while fast food restaurants continue to climb in wages. We are overworked and underpaid while being short staffed due to the pay rate offered for our position. We choose to spend our days helping and supporting the people that we care for, teaching them and learning from them. Now I feel we are being forced to choose between them and our families. Some of our customers only have us and if we have to leave the job that we love because the pay doesn't support us being there it hurts everyone but it hurts them the most.

Thank you again for taking the time out of your day to hear each and everyone of us. I hope you see just how important we are to our customers and how important our customers are to us.

Thank you,

Monica Schmale  
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