

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen, members of the committee, my name is Devyn Thurman, and I am a Direct Support professional for Partnerships in Community Living.

I am here today, to address my own concerns about pay, staffing and access to training for workers the DD field. I have worked for Partnerships in Community Living for 4 years now and feel that these are a few of the areas that need to be addressed. The most important is the lack of staffing for the people we support in this field, this no doubt is in direct correlation to the low wages in the field. I want to be clear, that while I understand wages are a big part of the reason we are short on staff, I feel there needs to be more levers in system that will address the lack of over-sight in the community. Raising wages, or rates, alone, isn't going to solve the problems I see in our system.

As a relief staff, I am frequently moved from home to home to cover open shifts from either callouts, or lack of staffing in general. Between poor communication and a lack of available staff, the people we support, and my coworkers, have been repeatedly left high and dry trying to make up for what is an extreme need of more workers.

I have personally had to work at a home in Salem with 3 people whom I had not been acquainted with, nor properly trained in providing supports for their needs. While I am adaptable and may be able to "wing" a shift like this, it cannot be a comfortable situation for the people we support, who already endure different people coming in and out of their homes. To exacerbate situations like this, and a lack of staff the home, we are sometimes unable to accommodate trips out into the community. The biggest priority of a Direct Support staff like myself, is to support the people we work with so they can have fulfilling and exciting lives. However, between a lack of access to training, with no real transparency in the system, and a lack of people in general, we

are frequently grasping at straws to meet the bare minimum requirement for even maintaining their lives.

It is imperative that there is more concrete regulation and accountability behind staff training and a change to the system that allots funding for the people we support. This is an important field and it is important that the people we support are able to get adequate supports. In order to achieve this, we need to do more than just increase rates. We need clear accountability to assure rates are truly passed on to workers and better access to quality training. We need stronger workplace protections and regulations set in place to assure that workers have a voice, and not being asked to cover the work of multiple people, and that the people we support are able to live independently, and with dignity.

Sincerely,

Devyn Thurman

Direct Support Professional