

Submitter: Christine Hays

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Two years ago my organization employed 400 direct support professionals across nearly 60 residential group homes for adults and children with disabilities. Today we only employ 200 direct support professionals and have had to close or consolidate so many programs I've lost count - not because there aren't enough individuals who need our services (quite the opposite is true) but because we can no longer compete with and attract candidates to work as caregivers at the current rates of pay.

Being a caregiver is incredibly hard work, both emotionally and physically and there are few jobs as important to those who need it. I ask that you imagine that you yourself might one day be in need of care and maybe you will have to rely on a direct support professional to help you when you are at your most vulnerable. How important would it be to you that your caregiver is a professional, someone who sees their work as a career, someone who isn't just doing the work because it's the only job desperate enough to hire them. That's the situation the current rates are putting us in. We're so desperate for staff that we can't even be discerning about who we hire and we can't offer enough pay to attract the most qualified and experienced staff. Every human being deserves the dignity of care and the dignity of earning a living wage. Please help us.