

Submitter: Michelle Kemry
On Behalf Of: Valor Associates LLC
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure: HB2457

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you regarding HB 2457, on behalf of my staff and clients at Valor Associates, LLC, in order to encourage you to support this much needed funding. Our Valor team has been providing services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities for the past 18+ years. While it can be grueling work at times, it is so vital to the health of our individuals as well as our communities. The rewards are often unmeasurable. Many of you may not know or understand the level of support(s) our Direct Support Professionals (DSP) provide on a daily basis for our client, so I would encourage you to take some precious time to intentionally go out and meet the Direct Support Professionals and clients that would be benefitting greatly from you standing in support of this bill. Furthermore, many of our Direct Support Professionals are pulling double shifts, working insane amounts of overtime due to the inability to hire people because so many other industries can offer higher wages and better benefits. As a provider, my hands are tied. We have set rates to operate within. We can't decide to raise the price and pass it on to the consumer as so many other industries have done and are continuing to do. I completely understand, your time is at a premium during session, but I urge you to get out and meet a few Direct Support providers, their teams and clients, listen to their stories.

Sadly, our state is full of addicted, mentally unstable individuals on our streets. While many of the adults receiving DD services have a choice to live in a supported living environment. I can tell you, many of these same clients may choose not to live in a supported living environment because so many programs are understaffed and are unable to offer the quality support those individuals require. Not to mention, many programs over the past few years have been forced to shut down displacing individuals or requiring those individuals move to different counties that end up being further away from their families and friends. We certainly cannot afford to have them moving to the streets where our law enforcement is already overwhelmed.

I appreciate your time and attention to this very important bill and your willingness to listen to my testimony. Please stand up for our Direct Support Professionals by voting yes on HB 2457.