

Submitter: Melissa Silbernagel  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1505

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Starr, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB1505. I'm Melissa Silbernagel and I am writing to advocate for more guidance and minimum standards for agencies providing pairing services to families and individuals who receive support services for qualifying disabilities.

My son Silas is 11 and experiences Autism. He is nonverbal, sensory seeking, has pica, and may sometimes be referred to as captain destructor, wiggle, or on occasion damit Silas. Because of Silas's many beautiful and eccentric mannerisms he requires those supporting him to utilize a lot of visual attention, listening, patience, and non lingual interpretation.

As a parent of a child with DD you have MORE. More meetings, more appointments, more forms, more responsibilities, more expectations, more tears, more bills, more rules, more guidelines, more time off work, more people judging you, more opinions, and a whole bunch of others I left off the list. With all of the more that comes along with your loved one;, you are graced with LESS. Less time, resources, money, and often simple comforts.

It would be amazing if the more and less in my life were a bit more balanced. I wish I could say I went to bed half my nights feeling like I had taken care of everything I needed to. I want to be enthusiastic when I say I am so grateful to have personal support worker hours to help bring some balance to my life and family. I am certain things are barely manageable because I am able to rely on the support hours I get to help me care for Silas.

I am sincere when I say I do not know how we would have made it to today without our support worker hours. That being said, there is more work that must be done to make that invaluable family resource more reliable, consistent, and functional. It could be better if there were more across the board standards. These standards would help me even though I am a person who is gifted at advocating, understanding policy, rights, and all of the MORES I listed above that come with loved ones who experience disabilities.

One of the most consistent and reliable things I experience with my kiddo's support worker hours is turnover. It's impressive the number of workers who have had keys to my home, used my toilet, seen my dirty laundry, read my son's ISP, IEP, PBSP, and the many more acronyms used in our family's day to day life. The phrase "that's not

how we did it when I worked for” is the second most consistent thing about the many workers who have filtered through my home.

I really could speak for hours about all the reasons you each should support this bill. These standards are needed to prevent workers from continued confusion on what is and is not acceptable related to everything... Goals, charting, training, and rate of pay. These are just a few of many things that should not differ if the money is coming from the same place. If these things were standardized it would help families take ONE MORE thing from their list of things. The workers and families would benefit from these standards. While the agencies might not be able to see it, I believe it would slow workers from cycling through agencies and reduce the current agency surfing I hear about from those sifting through my home.

Finally, I want to thank my provider agency. They know who they are and it would not surprise me if they have someone here speaking against this bill today. I understand it will result in them having a bit more. I just believe it's someone else's turn to experience the increased levels of more. My agency really is a good agency and my son and our family are appreciative we get opportunities parents with other agencies probably don't see. My agency has put a lot of effort into building community and that model benefits my family greatly. It's my belief that value should also be a minimum standard that each family or individual can rely on. Thanks for your time and thoughtful consideration