

Dear Committee Members,

I have had the honor of filling the role of a Direct Support Professional (DSP) for over ten years.

One day, out of curiosity, we picked a random fellow and counted.

As we suspected, it was unbelievable. A wonderful person we support, with severe disabilities, had over forty different DSPs assist him in intimate ways over a short six-month period.

Imagine...

That is a busload of strangers rotating through, helping him, including in the bathroom.

These people often have little guidance about where to start, for he cannot tell you what he needs help with.

Would you stand for this if it was you, or somebody you loved?

Unfortunately, this is not so unusual and a clear demonstration of how our chronically low paid, unstable workforce directly affects people.

Consider this person's ongoing experience when you are making your decision. He is just one of thousands living the same nightmare.

Look back into history and you will see, the skilled people who provide these supports have been financially neglected. In doing so, this reflects directly on the people they serve.

We are too short staffed, doing life saving work. We are too dispersed across the state to effectively make ourselves visible to the media and you. This invisible, giant workforce shows up, no matter what hour, which holiday, or which danger might be at the door. Continually doing everything we can to improve vulnerable lives.

Take this plea to heart... Please, make it right.

Raise the Wage.

150% of the minimum wage will never be too much.

My heart is filled with fearful concern, as I do thank you for your time and consideration.

-Candice Zalenski