

Honored Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee,

It has been a very interesting year plus to say the least in Southern Oregon. Between a nasty virus that you may have heard about, dramatic and devastating wildfires and the combined impact of job loss in our area, our most vulnerable population, people with IDD, have been through hell.

The staff of Creative Supports, Inc, the Support Services Brokerage for Jackson and Josephine counties has walked alongside the people we serve while also experiencing many of the same impacts and yet never missed a beat in supporting the people we serve.

In late February early March of 2020, we began to hear about a very infectious and potentially deadly virus that was sweeping across the US and the world. I heard from my daughter in Germany that they were shutting down everything in Germany and she was not sure what was going to happen with her teaching job with DODEd not to mention what was happening for her husband who is stationed at the Air Base. From the information she was sharing I became very concerned for our staff and for the people we served. We had staff begin to contact the people we serve even before the shut down order began. On a personal side note, I have not gotten to see my daughter since her wedding July 2019.

Our initial outreach to 100% of the people we serve (over 500 people) involved verbal notice and written training material on hygiene safety practices and social distancing. As more information became available about the use of face coverings, we again educated 100% of the people we serve and their families on the additional information. We also invested in N95 and protective gloves and made these available to the people we serve at no cost to them.

Besides keeping the people, we serve safe and attempting to predict what would be the next best practice for these people I had to keep our own team as safe as I could. We began an in-office rotation which limited who could be in the office and how many people could be in the office at any given time, but the work expectations did not go away and in fact escalated. As this continued to stretch on, I invested in laptops and other IT expenses to assure people could be productive from home and maintain confidentiality standards. This was not in the budget but essential to assure we were here for the people we serve. We have continued to make costly adaptations to assure the people we serve experience no interruption of services.

We thought we finally had this dialed in and then our beautiful corner of the world exploded in flames. We were somewhat used to wildfires around us in our forests, but this came to our homes in 2020. Again, our amazing team stepped up and reached out to every single family that may have even been remotely at risk. This was done as our staff were evacuating their own homes. We had staff that were calling clients from their personal cells while sitting in their cars with their own possessions. We had a staff person that lost everything to the fire one day, went to stay with her family in the Illinois Valley and was evacuated with her family there the next day. She called her clients while sitting by her tent in a field.

Please fully fund I/DD case management in the Human Services budget. Adequately funding I/DD services is an investment to assure our most vulnerable population is supported safely and efficiently but also acknowledges the passion and commitment of the people behind the services.