

My name is Patty Falkenstein and I am writing in support of House Bill 4129. I have 33 years of experience as a Personal Support Worker (PSW) and advocate for both consumers and providers. I've been involved as a union officer, rules advisory committee member, served on the Disability Emergency Management advisory board, and serve on the Governor's Commission for Senior Services.

I've worked within the school system and the ODHS system to put the structure in my place for my consumer to live as full life as possible within their decisions and choices. Not being paid on time, partial pay, little to no retirement, and difficulty with state systems keeps this job precarious and less than attractive to new workers.

Consumers being able to choose their own care and live more independently is a goal we all want. Inadequate case management capacity is resulting in consumers not being able to find providers, low and partial pay leads to high turnover and unstable access to care.

My consumer is 24/7. I am capped at 60 hours a week, so we have three other part-time providers that fill in as needed. This does not allow for a vacation, or much in the way of sick time. If there is no other support available, then I am the sole provider/responsible person. This includes constant supervision, all meals, hygiene, medication, community interaction, mental stimulation – every aspect of life.

Lack of communication led me to lose my differential. It wasn't identified for months. The pay stub does not specify what pay is what so it's almost impossible to know if pay is correct. Its even worse for folks that don't speak English. I currently have a grievance because I wasn't paid the correct differential for almost two months.

Providers need a professional HR system that pays correctly and on time, immediately corrects pay problems, can provide timely authorization for consumer hours, and completes assessments on time.

The gray tsunami is coming so we need a professional working system that can handle the workload efficiently and without costly grievances. This is why I am asking the Legislature to pass House Bill 4129, to create an alternative that addresses some of the most persistent challenges workers and consumers are facing.

Thank you,

Patty Falkenstein

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