



I am here today to talk about why I support the Governor's Executive Budget.

I became an agency provider in 2001. All though, I have lived this field my entire life, through the eyes of my older brother. We were lucky in our family we were able to support his needs and we never needed to rely on the "system" to provide him a quality life.

Some of my brother's friends were not in that same position to have family support. I was elated when I saw the first real staff increase in the Governor's budget, you see when I started out in this field there was a formula to calculate our rates and the minimum wage used at that time was \$5.00 per hour. So to see a 6% staff increase rate to give to my dedicated 250plus employees it was like Christmas morning. Now the fear of losing it looms over our heads.

So, for just a moment take a walk in my shoes. An average wage of a direct care worker in my area is \$9.00 per hour to start (no benefits) most are eligible for Medicaid services themselves. An average wage at sheets (shift supervisor) for my area is \$13.00 per hour with benefits. The responsibilities are no way in comparison to support these wages. I am very lucky to say I have a 4% staff turnover rate not due to what we can pay but to the environment that we have nurtured with our employees. If we truly value the people we work for, we need to support continuity in their life by making this field have a working living wage. I hope that you will reconsider the impact that losing this 6% increase will cause. This 6% raise will enable us to increase staff wages and focus on the future of providing quality services to people.

Our field is an evolving system, we support growth and independence and we have a long way to go to truly say we have equality in this world. When we speak about the DC closures and we hear people's concerns, I understand their fears as I would have the same for my brother. When we closed our state institution of Apple Creek parents were fearful of the unknown but we have several success stories of individuals that moved from Apple Creek to the DC centers and then moved to the community, were they all successful, no they were not, but what about the ones that were ??? If we don't continue to evolve as a community and learn to grow and accept change together, where will our "system" be 10 years from now ??? As our population lives longer and needs more services we need to think about how we will provide them. The budget also had the capability of new waivers to address those that are not receiving any services, while there are some that may receive more than they need. Streamlining our system

and adding services to our waivers such as nursing will also help transition people to be able to live in their community thus managing our dollars in a more effective way, to serve more people. I feel that the Governor's Budget was the best chance our field has had, to finally begin to make positive supportive changes in an ever-changing world that we all experience everyday.

Thank you for your time

Kathy Phillips