Witness Testimony for Senate Finance Committee – House Bill 166

To the Finance committee

Please help our loved ones with complex health issues!

As a mother of a 21 year old son with multiple disabilities and health issues who receives home nursing services, I am immensely concerned about the DSP crisis going on in our state and in the country. The crisis includes nursing and HPC aid services. As a step to help the crisis, I support an increase in DSP wages and non medical transport wages. I support the increase to $16 pr hour for DSP’s. I also believe that providing funding for more TRAINING for DSP’s is equally as important. I have personal experience that has shown that if an aid that does not feel confident in their ability to care for a medically & physically complex individual, they will not stay at their job. Back when my son received aid services, aid after aid would work for a week and quit. The only aids that ever stayed and were capable were the ones that were going to school to be a nurse. The lack of training has also lead to serious medical issues, such as when my son was hospitalized for aspiration pneumonia due to an aid continuing to feed him without using the procedure needed for his swallowing / aspiration issues.

One way to ensure that individuals with multiple health issues can stay at home and out of the hospital or ICF’s, would be to ensure funding to keep waiver NURSING SERVICES in place. LPN’s are already trained to handle complex care. Our nurses have kept our son out of the hospital by using their ability to do lung assessments & nursing judgement to give him Albuterol treatments, suctioning, and other procedures. HPC aids are not qualified in their 16 hours of training to handle complex care, and due to the turnover rate, HPC service cannot ensure the health & safety of these individuals. Continuity of care is critical for our kids. Since my son started receiving nursing services we have had nurses stay for up to 11 years and they have helped keep him out of the hospital many times.

Our recent loss of nursing providers (due to retirement) has brought much stress on our family, as we search for care in a field plagued by shortages.

I pray that our legislators will fight for our loved ones with disabilities to do something significant to help stop this crisis in the DD system of care.