

OHK Finance 21st H. Health & Human Services Committee 01/10/2023

As the parent of a young man with severe autism and high needs, I would like to discuss how the DD Crisis has impacted myself and my family.

Since my son has graduated high school in 2015 I have had to quit my job as a Registered Nurse to care for my son as he is 24/7 care. We could not find staff at the rates that were being offered, and that was in 2015.

We have continued to look for staff, but due to the fact that workers can make comparable wages at a fast food job, many opt for those types of jobs versus a job where they may have to wipe a rear end or possibly deal with a behavior, especially when there are also zero benefits. The turnover in this field is also very high, so once someone is trained they often move on to a higher-paying job. This has led to my son not being able to access health care promptly which, in 2022, led to his having to be hospitalized for 3 weeks and then sent respite for 5 and a half weeks - which cost the State thousands more than if he had had staff to take him to the doctor when he needed to go. This staffing shortage due to poor reimbursement rates also affects my son's ability to be a participating member of the community - as he cannot find the assistance needed to access the same things as non disabled persons. It also affects family units as a whole as it puts a huge strain on families that may be barely getting by as it is. If a family member must stay home to care for a loved one, that financially impacts the household and can lead to more reliance on public assistance.

Please help the disabled community and support an hourly starting wage of \$20.00 an hour with benefits - so those helping the most needy and vulnerable in our society are not also needing to rely on public assistance to keep the lights on themselves.

Thank you so much.

Marianne Breyer