

House Committee on Finance and Appropriations
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Ronda Hodges
Direct Support Professional – Brookside Extended Care
March 16, 2023

Chairwoman Carruthers, ranking member Liston and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee, my name is Ronda Hodges and I am currently the Activities Director at Brookside Extended Care. I worked at Brookside as a DSP for several years in the 80's and returned 5 ½ years ago. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

I would like to talk today about how the DSP staffing crisis has affected the lives of the residents at Brookside. One of the purposes of an ICF is to assist individuals in building skills that would allow them to live more independently in the future. We do this through active treatment which is required by DODD and ODH. Active treatment is the term used to describe the training programs that are in place to maintain a person's skills and build new skills. Unfortunately, when we are short staffed it is services like these that cannot be provided.

Even though my title is Activities Director, I am functioning as a DSP. This has been the case for QIDPs, the Director of Nursing and even the Administrator! When we are short staffed we all have to function as DSPs just to make sure that are residents are fed, clean and repositioned. Brookside is unique in that we have 92 children and adults that are completely dependent on staff to provide for all their needs. They cannot walk, talk, feed themselves, go to the bathroom or even turn themselves in bed. Being short staffed definitely threatens the health and safety our residents. If they do not receive personal care in a timely manner or are not turned frequently they can develop bed sores. If the individuals who are tube fed, which is over half our building, are not positioned correctly they could aspirate. Our residents who eat by mouth require a 1:1 staff person with them at all times due to their high risk of choking and aspiration. All of our residents are lifted or repositioned a minimum of 12 times per day. It takes a lot of staff to provide these services to 92 people. As you can see, just meeting basic needs at Brookside is a huge undertaking. Imagine the panic when only 3 DSPS show up!

Our residents need more than just the basics. They deserve so much more than being stuck in their bedrooms because we don't have enough staff to take them to the activity rooms. They deserve the chance to get out of the building and participate in the community. It's more challenging than it sounds. Taking our residents on outings requires each person to have a 1:1 because they are in wheelchairs. For people with disabilities, whether they live in an ICF or waiver setting, they are unable to do all the things we take for granted like running to the store,

hanging out with friends or just getting out of the house for awhile. They depend on us to create these opportunities for them but because of staffing shortages most individuals have not been able to leave their homes or participate in activities for an extended period of time.

It is very sad to me because I have seen how our residents light up when exposed to new things and how excited they get when they learn a new skill. Staffing shortages result in assembly line care which is unacceptable.

I am asking that you please support an increase to the DD budget. Something must be done to address the staffing shortage. We need to be able to offer a fair and competitive wage in order to recruit and retain people to do this very important and difficult job.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to come and speak to you today.