

Jennifer Hickey  
Testimony on HB 33  
Supporting the DD Workforce

I have been living in the dsp shortage since 2011.

Last year, I thought, finally..we have a great company who seems to have a great future ahead of them. My fiancé has MS and I have a rare heart condition so knowing that my autistic son is being taken care of takes a little stress off of my already chaotic life.

But last Friday, I received a call at 5:47 pm to let me know that this company was giving me a 30 day notice to stop my sons' services due to staffing shortages. Now, I find myself panicking trying to figure out how am I going to find another company to take care of my son if this is happening all over the US? And if I can't find a company, how do I then, take care of my fiancé and son without risking my own health since I am the one they both depend on.

I feel for both sides of this situations. The parents who are struggling to find help and the dsp's who are trying to help others while trying to maintain their families. Both sides go through alot of stress trying to do the right thing. And I have always been an advocate for my aides because I believe they deserve to be recognized and have health insurance and other added benefits because they do sometimes have to deal with behaviors they aren't normally used to.

But as a mother, it was never my intention, as I'm sure it wasn't for other parents, to not take care of their children when they got older. My plan was to always have my son with me until I took my last breath and hoped family would step in after that. But the Harsh reality is, sometimes life takes you down a different road and it's bumpy and hurts like hell.

We are struggling. Dsp's are struggling. We all need help! Someone needs to realize that we are all humans and we exist!! We need DSP's. And we need companies that honestly care about the clients.