

Melissa Green  
Testimony on HB 33  
Supporting the DD Workforce

As our world has been negatively impacted by innumerable amounts of natural disasters, violence, pandemics, and uncertainty, so has the health, safety and security of those vulnerable individuals that we serve and those caregivers who go above and beyond to provide them with the complex care that they greatly need. I see and hear the countless accounts of the struggles these caregivers have to get food on their table, gas to get to trainings and work, having to work 2-3 jobs in order to just keep their heads above water. I hear the stories of family members who are distraught and can't find a caregiver to fill a shift, and how their health and wellness suffers trying to stay up all night providing necessary care for their loved one AND working all day. Having worked in a hospital setting, I know that these caregivers do ten times the amount of work than does the average nursing care tech in a hospital setting AND under much greater risk to their health and safety. It makes absolutely no sense to me why they should not be compensated at a competitive rate. A LIVING WAGE. They deserve it so that we can build up our caregiver workforce. We must build up this workforce so that we can continue to adequately care for our most vulnerable citizens, those with IDD and/or MH conditions. THEY DESERVE IT. Also, I have recently been diagnosed myself with a rare brain disorder and have experienced first hand what its like to be in need of assistance and struggle to get care in hospital settings, ERs, testing facilities, etc. Our area is struggling with maintaining an adequate healthcare work force. We must work collectively crossing party lines to determine how we are going to fix this issue. Action must happen now.