

Olivia McMasters
Testimony on HB 33
Supporting the DD Workforce

Hello. I started working for an intermediate care facility (ICF) in September of 2013 as a direct support professional (DSP). I came to love the position and felt like those that I cared for were like family. I also worked in the recreation department at the ICF to help get the individuals more involved in the community, as well as provide transportation to medical appointment. I then moved to being a DSP at a day program working with those adults who were considered retired or couldn't obtain community employment for various reasons. My job was to provide them with a meaningful day and keep their skills for independence. I again made a move to another day program to do the same thing. At both locations, I provided transportation to and from the program. I have finally moved on to a county board of developmental disabilities as a service and support administrator (SSA). Throughout the years of working in this field, I have been faced with financial challenges due to the low levels of pay at each provider. I took on custody of my niece and enrolled in college to obtain a degree so that I could hopefully earn a higher wage. There were times I had to consider changing careers for financial reasons, even though I truly love the work that I do and couldn't imagine working in any other field. I have been able to get to know many wonderful people within this field who also face the same challenges that I did and many have left to find better paying jobs. The DSP crisis is a domino effect that can and will impact more than just persons served and their DSPs. I urge you to put yourself in the shoes of DSPs, individuals, and their families to understand this crisis and to take action to solve this crisis.