

Francine Ris
Senate Medicaid Committee
Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 33
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Chairperson Romanchuk, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 33.

My name is Francine Ris. I am the parent of two daughters and three stepsons. My youngest daughter, Amanda, was born 34 years ago weighing 2 lbs., 2 oz. at 27 weeks gestation. As a result, she has spastic quadraplegia, cerebral palsy. She is bright, beautiful and requires complex care and support.

She is fortunate to have services through the IO Waiver which is administered by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. And I am grateful for all the commitment that has gone into establishing these services and acknowledging their necessity.

My intent today is to share my perspective on the current Direct Support Professional or DSP workforce crisis. I have personal experience of what it takes to hire, train, and oversee the DSP's who work with my daughter. She needs 24/7 support and care which translates to an average of ten full and part-time staff. I am in a perpetual recruitment process in order to maintain full coverage. Her quality of life is only going to be as good as the people who support her.

So how do I find new, good people to support Amanda, especially over the last couple of years when it's been so hard to find someone? Here is an example of what it takes...

On Feb 26th of this year, I was down two providers so I posted two ads on the employment website, Indeed, one of the largest employment job sites in the world. After two months:

The ads received 4,380 views.

Of these, 101 formally applied.

Of those 101 applicants, I rejected 63 for various reasons including: clearly unqualified, poorly written resumes, limited work history, or frequent job changes in a short amount of time.

That left 38 people who I was interested in talking to, so I either emailed or phoned each one of them and followed up.

Out of those 38 people, there was mutual interest with 5 individuals and I scheduled interviews.

So over 4,000 people who viewed the ad, 101 applied to the job, 38 passed my initial screening, and 5 agreed to in person interviews. Out of those 5 individuals, I had one no show, two cancel, one I didn't like and hired the other one.

Unfortunately, four days later she texted me to say she wanted to "bow out" after starting the certification process. I also had an ad on a job site called Care.com for two months as well. And I finally found someone who started last week. So it took me over two months to find one person. That same scenario played out in the three months prior. Posted two ads in October '22 and December '22 and found someone from the Indeed job site to start in January. This is equivalent to finding a diamond in the rough.

Why does it take so long and so hard? I believe low pay plays a big role. There have been many studies cited on reputable websites like Indeed, Glassdoor, and SHRM that have found that money is the number one motivator for two thirds of job seekers. I think low wages in this field likely equates to low quality of life outcomes for individuals with disabilities. And we cannot have a mindset in the direct support arena that is focused primarily on physical health and safety as the minimum. Security, comfort, meaningful activity, relationships, dignity, autonomy, privacy, and individuality should be a priority goal rather than an afterthought. This takes a certain level of maturity, interest, and empathy on the part of the DSP.

The current candidate pool for direct support professionals is limited. Please raise their rates to an average of \$20 hour to attract better employees. The quality of support rises when the wage is higher. The job attracts better candidates. It can't just be about surviving. It has to be about **thriving**.