



Sandra K. Black
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 110
Senate Finance Committee
May 11th, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only, interested party testimony in consideration of House Bill 110 (HB 110)—the state's biennial budget. My name is Sandra Black, and I am the parent of a child with multiple disabilities as well as the daughter of a parent with dementia.

Older adults and people with disabilities depend on community-based supports, specifically the direct care workforce, in order to meet their daily needs. These are the type of needs that you and I often take for granted. Direct care workers, such as home health and personal care aides, assist their clients with housekeeping, preparing and/or feeding meals, bathing and other personal hygiene needs, and engaging in activities within the communities in which they live. It is very important the state support these workers because they are the foundation of our home and community-based services systems.

The availability of direct care workers is in critically short supply. The first home health aide to provide care for my daughter was an acquaintance that was asked to work for an agency so that she could be hired. After six months, she left us for a higher paying job. Since then, and long before the pandemic, every attempt to find another home health aide has been unsuccessful. Direct care workers are underpaid and turnover is extremely high. The resulting loss of assistance and frequent changes in caregivers disrupt client care. For example, my daughter is currently failing to regain mobility after surgery without the assistance of an in-home provider. While families rely on and value the providers of in-home support immensely, the compensation that the direct care workforce receives does not reflect the true value of their services, nor does it adequately support their own basic needs.

Direct care providers are indeed essential workers, providing services that directly impact the health, safety and quality of life for our older population and those living with disabilities. Without the services provided by home health aides and personal care attendants, many people including my daughter and my mother, will be forced to live in a nursing home or institution. Appropriate wages, as well as benefits, must be provided to the direct care workforce immediately so that our loved ones can stay in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as an interested party on HB 110. If you have any questions or would like to discuss these issues further, please contact me at sandrakleiserblack@gmail.com or at 937-225-1481.

