



House Finance Committee
Interested Party Testimony, HB33
April 19, 2023

I wish to thank Chairperson Jay Edwards for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB33.

My name is Carolyn Anderson. My son, Kevin Anderson, is 39 and has been on an Ohio Medicaid Waiver since the age of eight. That is when he received a tracheostomy tube, ventilator (part-time) and gastrostomy button. We are very grateful Ohio has Waiver programs. It has literally made the difference between life and death for my son.

Kevin received a definitive diagnosis at the age of one of SMA – Spinal Muscular Atrophy. This is the No. 1 genetic killer of children under the age of two. As you can see, he has far exceeded any expectations of any doctor. This has only been with the help of nurses in our home. Nurses made it possible for him to attend school, even going on to Lakeland Community College and Lake Erie College where he eventually received a BA in Communications summa cum laude.

Like many people, the last few years have been a nightmare. COVID changed the game for all of us. The flight of nurses, including homecare, has left us with few options. Families, like mine, are completely exhausted from filling in all the shifts that nurses are not available. At almost 72, that is not an easy task. Kevin currently only has one day shift covered. His night nurses, so I can sleep, range in age from 70-76. That is not a good long-term forecast. Without night nurses, I put cushions on the floor so I can hear him on the ventilator and turn him every 1.5-2 hours, suction him, and disconnect nutrition he receives through the night. Without them, I am a zombie and exhausted the next day especially when there is no nurse.

We have tried every avenue we have available. We have worked through agencies. One told us they posted but the respondents turned it down because of the low pay. We have posted through independent provider FB pages. Going through our managed care company, CareSource, also proved fruitless. Lastly, we went through a new provider/client matchup through PCG which also came up with nothing. We are at a loss.

I have seen many articles/local shows on the direct care provider(aide) shortage. I agree, their wages also need to be raised. There are many advocates for this – DODD, Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging, to name just two.

These are people that truly are some of the most vulnerable in society with no one to speak up for them. That is why a group of persons/family members got together to establish a social media campaign this week. This is evident in the logo above. Our hope is to bring awareness to our situation, especially during budget hearings.

Homecare nurses in Ohio are some of the lowest paid compared to surrounding states. By raising the reimbursement rates for homecare nurses, both through agencies and independent providers, we hope this will help to alleviate some of the **immediate** problem and bring nurses back into the fold.

But, let us not fool ourselves, this is a problem that will be with us for many years to come. Ohio must develop a long-term plan to recruit and retain nurses for all segments (hospitals, nursing homes, homecare). That is another important discussion for a later date.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,
Carolyn Anderson