

Testimony of Stacey Browning before the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services | March 14, 2023

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for having me here today. My name is Stacey Browning. I am the mother of Mitchell Browning, a severely disabled young man who turns 16 tomorrow (3-15-2023) and has the distinction of being 8th in the world diagnosed with his particular genetic disorder that results in him requiring all of his care to be done by others. He cannot sit, stand, walk, see, feed or change himself, he has seizures, breathing issues and other medical concerns. Our family is fortunate that since 2015, Mitchell has resided at St. Joseph Home in Sharonville, Ohio where he receives the nursing and personal support he requires.

Let me quickly emphasize a couple things. It's not easy or normal to transition your child to someone else's care so young. It's been made easier because we have learned to value having options for our son's care. For instance, we prefer and see benefit for him residing in a larger facility, in our case an ICF, that brings multiple resources together in one setting. It also diminishes risk as one is not reliant on a limited sized team. We've also embraced having high concern for those in the role of caregiver or DSP. They are on the frontline doing the what's needed for Mitchell.

Still, we have been around the healthcare and disabilities community for 17 years now and are seeing signs of the increasing stress of the industry lately. Specifically, we are observing:

1. The same employee flexing to perform multiple roles, filling in where needed
2. Employees aware and sensitive to when the whole organization is not doing its best
3. The increasing war for talent resulting in losing experienced workers to other facilities and hospitals that are offering significant hiring bonuses and challenged themselves, are more open to the hiring of less skilled candidates
4. Difficulty in rehiring, causing positions to be open for long durations

5. Uncertainties about the practicalities of delegated nursing in real practice
6. That it takes time and expertise to revolutionize and process improve for efficiency - a fresh approach to group living is needed

Again, my family is incredibly grateful our son Mitchell is able to reside at St. Joseph Home and appreciate the State of Ohio's investment in the Developmental Disabilities network. We have high trust in all leadership involved. It's merely become obvious to us, care-recipients, that what's worked in the past is no longer exactly the model for the future in terms of workforce, compensation, and systems. Our family remains open to collaboration and providing feedback toward the goal of improvement and sustainability for the disabled community.

Sincerely,

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