

JoAnn Smith
Testimony on HB 33
Supporting the DD Workforce
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Wednesday of this week Amanda and Dan will start with a new provider agency. Complete strangers enter your home and all they know about you is what is written in your Individual Service Plan or ISP. All you know about them is that they work for the new provider company, which is much less than they know about you. Too, if you happen to have a disability where you need total assistance every time you use the toilet, take a shower, get dressed, get in and out of your bed or wheelchair, you can feel very vulnerable. You are about to place all your trust in perhaps six new people to take care of you. Each one will come in with their own idea of how this is going to work. Each one will have their own set. Some may be single, married, divorced. Some may have children. More important, how are we going to get along? Will they be able to look past my disability and see the person I truly am? As Amanda's Mom and advocate, I can tell you it has been tough. 4 years ago the pandemic lead to more Staff shortages. Agencies were desperate to find employees and keep them so often they would ignore client complaints and cater to staff. In other words, turn a blind eye. This will be the seventh, yes 7th company since the start of the pandemic four years ago. This means that approximately every 7 months Amanda and Dan have to start all over again. As advocates, natural supports and parent's we are asking for wages to be increased so quality help will want to compete for these jobs and keep them. Too, we need higher wages for those with developmental disabilities that need more physical care than others. Otherwise, those who need the most help will not get it. Taking care of adults physically is hard work and parents are aging and wondering what is going to happen with their loved one.