

Carolyn Anderson  
Senate Finance Committee  
Interested Party Testimony, HB33  
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## ***What if this was your son?***



I wish to thank Chairperson Matt Dolan, Vice-Chairperson Jerry Cirino, Ranking Member Vernon Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee 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. He is currently on The MyCare Ohio Waiver. We are very grateful Ohio has Home and Community Based 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.

The advent of a tracheostomy tube meant life would never be the same. Though Kevin had physical and medical needs prior to this, they were manageable. Now, different resources would need to be put in place. That included additional equipment and nurses to help keep Kevin safely at home.

Like many people, COVID changed the game for all of us. The flight of nurses, including homecare, has left us with few options. Nurses started leaving for better paying opportunities even before COVID due to aging nurses retiring and increased demand for healthcare for aging, disabled and chronic disease population. Our current night nurses are 70-76

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. When my aging night nurses go for surgery(not uncommon) or vacation, I am forced to put cushions on the floor in his bedroom. The physical and mental toll seems unbearable at times.

We have tried every avenue we have available. We have worked through agencies. We have tried Independent Provider Sites. Kevin's Managed Care Plan Insurer, CareSource, proved fruitless. We are at a loss.

OHIO pays SUBSTANTIALLY LESS to both RN and LPN Medicaid providers and agencies than any of the surrounding states with the exception of Agency RN reimbursements in Kentucky. The differences can range from 21% more to 88 % more.

Kevin has been out of the hospital for six and a half years. For someone with his diagnosis, this is outstanding. He continues to amaze his doctors. This is certainly no coincidence. Hours of daily respiratory treatments, lung assessments, diligent skin care and a small, loyal group of compassionate, caring nurses have made this possible. However, without more nurses, I fear hospitalizations may be on the horizon. And when Kevin is hospitalized, he spends the entire time in the ICU unit, usually for a week. One does not have to be a math genius, to see how adequate homecare will save the state money.

The House's Substitute HB 33 Budget Bill Version included raising the reimbursement rate for direct service providers(DSP) in the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waivers by 32-40%. While we applaud these badly-needed increases for DSPs, nursing was completely overlooked. Nursing is a **completely separate** category from DSPs. Therefore, I ask that Nursing be given the same consideration as DSPs.

It is important to note that Kevin's night nurses, whom I alluded to previously, have chosen to stay with Kevin to keep him out of a nursing home. However, they hope to officially retire soon. It is important to note that they all receive social security and are on Medicare, also. This is not the case for younger nurses. Many have left, not because of lack of compassion, but because of lack of well-deserved income.

Will this solve all the nursing shortages? No. But it will help to retain the nurses we have. This is but one piece of the puzzle. The other piece involves a full-fledged campaign to recruit and train nurses. But that will be a discussion for a later time.

I imagine most of you have seen the movie, "The Green Mile" with Tom Hanks. By far the most memorable line is when the falsely charged inmate, John Coffey, utters the words "I'm tired Boss." He then goes into a litany of reasons.

**Well, I'm tired Senators**

**Tired of worrying about my son's future**

**Tired of begging for nurses**

**Tired of feeling hopeless and depressed**

**Tired of being tired**

**Tired of not being able to spend time with my other son and grandson**

**Tired of thoughts and prayers**

If I can answer any questions, you may reach out to me at [canderson51@sbcglobal.net](mailto:canderson51@sbcglobal.net).

Sincerely,

Carolyn Anderson