

4/8/19

I would like to speak on a personal note today, about a common story among many parents of children with developmental disabilities. My daughter Rebecca is 29 years old...I am close to 59 and I am the daughter/daughter-in-law of four aged parents.

When our daughter Rebecca was born, my husband and I made the decision that I would give up my dental hygiene profession to stay at home to care for her and take her to the numerous appointments she required, and we were fortunate to do this. We managed with some ups and downs over the years and were even able to receive some respite from parents. While we are fortunate to still have our parents, they are now in their eighties and they in addition require our care and attention.

Five years ago, we were able to help Rebecca settle into an independent living community. We accomplished this with Community Living Supports and the ongoing support from family, primarily myself. Then, over a year ago, we were "let go" from the agency that provided that CLS support, leaving us to manage this ourselves. We then began the journey of self-determination...hiring our own staff.

I'm here today to ask...How are we to compete for quality staff to care for our loved ones, when they can easily be employed at a higher wage? They can work at any fast food restaurant, with little responsibility and perhaps without traveling far from home. In addition, these higher paying jobs require none of the onerous training of direct care providers. We are now relying on the few people who find this profession a true calling and there are not enough of these special individuals to fill the demand.

We are facing a severe staffing crisis that will affect us all as the age of our general population increases and we are the primary caregivers to both generations, responsible for our children and parents.

We are calling on you, our state government, to do right by this most deserving group of individuals and appropriate enough funds to compensate our employees. We are asking that you please address the need to increase the wages to direct caregivers so we can have a competitive chance in attracting and recruiting quality CLS staff.

Thank you for your time,

Rochelle Stoler