

SB 2276

Senate Appropriations Committee

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

Senator Dever, Chair

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2276 for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 50 – 24.1 of the North Dakota Century Code relating to legally responsible individuals providing Medicaid waiver services.

My name is Deborah Hellman and I am the proud mother of two beautiful daughters. My 17-year-old daughter has received in-home care services under the DD Medicaid Waiver since she was born. The waiver has allowed me to continue working part time, contributing to my family finances.

My family has been blessed with many amazing nurses who have cared for our daughter allowing us to provide for our family, and we are grateful for all of them. Last year, my daughter's nurse of 10 years accepted a job elsewhere which provided her substantially more pay and benefits such as paid leave time, insurance, and retirement benefits. With her resignation, my family was tossed into the ocean of "workforce shortage." Like so many others, we have piecemealed help together, because we have not found a replacement for the former caregiver. We are juggling help from family, friends, and a daughter of the former nurse who have stepped in to help care for our daughter, and I have been able to continue working. We cannot effectively express how much we appreciate their help.

As did so many others, I moved my workspace to my home when the Coronavirus pandemic struck. My employer has since instituted a remote work policy that allows for remote work up to 40% of total work hours. Due to the workforce shortage and our lack of caregiver, I was unable to comply with that directive. My employer has graciously allowed me a temporary exception to the new remote work policy. I signed an agreement effective January 1, 2023 that extended approval for me to work fully remotely until February 28, 2023. In conversation with my supervisor last week, she indicated that she is hopeful another remote work extension will be approved, but did not guarantee it. I cannot help but feel that my job of 23 years is in a fragile position being held together by nothing but a short string. My supervisor has asked Administration about a possible extension, but has not forwarded a response from Administration at the time of this writing.

I cried as I read the testimony from other families regarding this bill. So many families need help. So many families have rolled up their sleeves and "made-do," and are paying the price with anxiety, heartache, and fear. It is palpable in the stories they have written. And they are only the tip of the iceberg. So many families are struggling financially, emotionally, and physically as they try to juggle life and the needs of a loved-one who needs extraordinary care. Help cannot come fast enough. If ever there was a family caregiver emergency, this is it.

I respectfully ask you to pass Senate Bill 2276.

Deborah Hellman

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