

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Kali Weinand and I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2276 to allow legally responsible individuals to provide Medicaid services to those on Medicaid waivers.

I am the mother of an autistic, developmentally delayed child who is on the North Dakota Developmental Disability Waiver. Due to her level of need, her waiver allows us to hire a caregiver to help meet her needs. She requires constant monitoring as she is a flight risk and struggles with simple daily tasks. It is not safe to leave her unattended for even a couple minutes. Due to the inability to find adequate staff to hire, I have been unable to continue working outside of the home.

We live in rural western North Dakota. The number of adequate staff to fill the services we are authorized for, is all but non-existent. I have contacted a number of potential employees in the past, with very limited success. Potential employees that I did find ended up taking other job offers that offered benefits, better hours with better pay, or more steady, consistent hours. We are living in a workforce crisis that is far reaching and can be seen everywhere. There is simply a lack of staffing for many businesses.

The next area of concern is finding staff that is adequately trained and appropriate to work with our daughter. If the hired caregiver is not well trained it is a cause for concern and can be extremely detrimental to not only my daughter, but to the caregiver and our family as a whole. We need a caregiver who is attentive and can attend to her needs. She is a flight risk and has in fact escaped our home before, in the dark. It was scary. If a caregiver was distracted and not watching, she could easily escape and put herself in serious danger.

My daughter already has a set number of care hours and I am not here to ask for more hours or more services. I am simply here to encourage you to enact this section that would allow legally responsible individuals to be eligible to be the provider of waiver services that she already qualifies for.

With me being home with our daughter, we have been able to make forward progress in areas of development and have been able to decrease the number of times she has left the house unattended because I am able to watch and care for her properly. I have been trained in her needs by her medical providers and numerous therapists. For the foreseeable future, I do not see an option to return to work. This has put a hardship on our family and we have had to make sacrifices, but living in a rural area definitely has significant staffing shortages.

I am here today to ask that you support this bill and recommend a "Do Pass." This bill would give families like mine, that are truly in a crisis, the choice to decide what caregiver options are best for their situation. This would ensure the best quality of life and care and ensure that families will not have to place our children in unsafe situations.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Kali Weinand

