

Senate Human Services
SB 2276
January 24th, 2023

Chairman Lee and members of the committee, my name is Katynka Morrisette and I am here today to share with you why I support Senate Bill 2276 to allow legally responsible individuals to provide Medicaid waiver services.

I am the mother of 3 medically complex children who are on the Medically Fragile Waiver due to their level of need and extraordinary care measures. Our waiver services allow us to hire a caregiver to help with the daily needs of our children and insure that they are able to stay living in our home. My children require constant monitoring, medications and nutrition given via their G-Tubes around the clock, blood glucose and ketone checks at least 5 times per day, breathing treatments, regular infusions through an implanted medical port, and assistance with many other tasks for daily living. These are the things we do routinely, when you add in an illness or metabolic crisis—the frequency of intervention they need multiplies.

Due to inability to hire staff to fill the service hours we are authorized for, I have been unable to continue working outside of the home. In the past 5 months I have contacted 36 potential employees and was able to cover a mere 5 hours per week. Either another job offer was made that provided them with benefits, more pay with less work, or they just didn't show up for their interview and gave no explanation. This is the workforce crisis we are living in, and you see it every day with businesses cutting back hours of service because of a lack of staff.

Even if we were able to find people willing to work, the concern in quality of care individuals receive increases as the level of need for the individual increases. A medication error or nutritional mistake could land our children in the hospital for many days and staff being inattentive to our child could put them in immediate danger. Unfortunately, we have had a care provider fall asleep while on the job as well as a caregiver continuously texting and leaving our children unattended. This is not acceptable when working with individuals with high medical needs.

We are not asking for additional care hours or extra services. We are simply asking that you allow legally responsible individuals to have the choice to provide the waiver services that are already authorized.

In these last few months of me being home full time we have experienced a decrease in hospital admissions because I am able to provide immediate intervention and work to stabilize their metabolic status quickly. The amount of extraordinary care measures I am trained and permitted to carry out by their medical team has allowed them to remain in our home. However, it did not come without sacrifice and I do not see an option to return to employment outside of our home given the staffing shortages.

I kindly ask that you support this bill becoming effective in July 2023, as families like ours are truly in a crisis and the need is urgent. Recommending a "Do Pass" on this bill would give families the freedom and choice to decide what service option provides their family member with the best quality of life and care. This also makes sure we don't have to face tough decisions like considering placement in a medical institution due to lack of caregivers.

Sincerely,

Katynka Morrisette