

House Appropriations Committee,

Samuel L. Ihry is my son. He is a client of the Open Door Center in Valley City. Sam has been a resident of the ODC for 15 years. Sam is 27 years old. Sam is non-verbal, not toilet trained, and eats a pureed diet. The ODC has been a blessing to him and to our family. Why??...THE STAFF.

The staff, and I quote one, Crystal, "I love my guys and spending my days with them". She could easily make more money and do less work if she went to McDonald's. However, she chose to apply and work at the ODC. The staff- Direct Support Professionals, of the Open Door Center consists of 165 men and women. Without the support and employment of Direct Support Professionals, 7,000 people of our most vulnerable population in our state could not receive the services and support that they require. The support of daily living, work placement, and most importantly being able to live independently and happily.

Direct Support Professionals work overnights, days and weekends. They are not drawing a large wage. They do it because they truly love their clients, my son, and the other individuals. Sam prays with Nicole and cooks with Michelle. Beka takes him to UND football games. Of Sam's core Direct Support Professionals, 4 of them have been with him all 15 years. These employees love their positions. Compensating them is the right thing to do. Direct Support Professionals have names and they have families. Please consider this when you discuss HB 1012. We need to retain quality staff for clients, my son, Sam.

Your support of a 4% inflationary increase is imperative. State employees may receive a 3% increase and many of them are not leaving the comfort of their kitchen to do their job. Please consider the hours and what fills the hours of Direct Support Professionals when you discuss HB 1012.

Thank you for your time and your support of the special needs community of North Dakota.

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(mom of Sam)