

Dear Chairman Nelson and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Addison Krueger. I am providing this testimony as a representation of my own thoughts and not on behalf of my employer. I am a North Dakota native, born and raised in Dickinson. I am currently a residential manager at ABLE, Inc., an agency that provides residential services to adults with disabilities. I am writing to you in support of Senate bill HB1012, asking for a 4% budget increase the first year and 3% increase the second year.

As mentioned, I work at ABLE, Inc. and the relationships I have built with the people I support have truly changed my life. I began my employment with ABLE when I was 19 and I will forever be grateful for all the amazing people I've grown to know. While my last three years with this agency have been incredible, they have not been without many challenges. The primary challenge being the limited budget ABLE must abide by.

Throughout my time as a DSP and as a manager, staff turnover has been a constant stressor. I have watched upwards of 40 staff resign since May 2021. This is at my worksite alone, not accounting for the various other sites within the agency. We are aware of this issue and have made great efforts to recruit and retain staff. We've attended job fairs, started a program through the local high school, held open interviews, posted flyers around town, and so much more. While recruiting is difficult in itself, the retention of these staff proves to be the most challenging.

What's the reason for this? It's the compensation ABLE has to offer employees. The wages are simply not livable in today's economy. As a supervisor, I hear the reasons for resignation. More often than not, employees are leaving to pursue "better" opportunities, and "better" in these cases almost always equates to a higher wage.

I have primarily addressed the impact of wages on the staff employed by ABLE Inc. However, it's also important to consider the effect that constant turnover has on the people we support, who have seen hundreds of faces come and go. Our inability to retain staff has led to near constant instability in the lives of the people supported by ABLE, Inc. There's a reluctance to build relationships and trust due to turnover, which are foundational to what we do at ABLE.

The State of North Dakota needs to increase wages for support staff to improve the lives of not only those staff, but also the people with disabilities supported by them. I ask that you support Senate Bill HB 1012. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please reach out if you have any questions.

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