

Chairman Nelson and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Danielle Salo and I am providing testimony of my own opinions and not the opinions of my employer. I am in an ICF lead position at ABLE Inc which provides residential services for adults with disabilities. I am writing in support of HB1012 to share my experience as a supervisor and leader in Developmental disabilities Services. I urge you to consider inflationary increases to support staff providing essential support to people with disabilities.

I was born and raised in the great state of North Dakota. Growing up in North Dakota, I have always known that hard work and uncompromising faith can get you through anything. Push through the hard times because it won't last forever, that's what my grandparents would always tell me. It has been increasingly difficult for me to keep that mindset over the last few years. I started my journey in the world of disabilities when I was 16 years old. I partnered in the Special Olympics. There I was surrounded by pure joy from the athletes. The laughter, competition but most of all, the love I felt for just being present in the moment with people that just loved me for me. Because of that love, in 2010 I joined the ABLE team in Dickinson, ND. I started as the residential manager for one of the ICF homes. At that time, it was rare to have an FT opening. We could choose the best fit for the people. We could say no to a staff member we weren't sure about. I feel like there was a large shift in work ethic during and after the pandemic. People don't want to work an 8-5 so finding people willing to work nights and weekends is extremely rare. These past few years have been the most difficult. I have seen things happening as simple as staff continually using their phones and ignoring people to people falling because they don't have enough staff. What do you do with those mediocre staff that allow people to fall because they aren't paying attention? We can't keep them because they cause harm but now, we don't have enough staff to cover a shift. So, we bring in travelers. In the past 2 years, we have needed to utilize 21 travel staff in our 4 ICF homes. Each travel staff works 50-60 hours per week. In 2024, we hired 32 staff for our ICF homes. We have lost 16 of those staff. That is a 50% turnover rate! More pay for employees means we can have better staff than job hoppers. Yes, we do have some wonderful staff, but it is common for those staff not to stay because they cannot live off these wages of a DSP. Increased wages mean increased ability to find the right staff. If staff could afford to stay, the people we support can have the security of knowing they have staff that they trust, that will be here to celebrate their birthday and to get you through that scary surgery. The sad truth is that not just any person can support someone with a disability. It takes a strong person and it's much easier to leave if you aren't getting paid enough to live a life outside of work. Because at the end of the day, burnout will ultimately happen because you don't have enough staff and here you are working your ass off because the love for people trumps it all. I support this bill because the people who need these services deserve staff that care. Staff that want to be at work. Staff that will enrich their life with joy and happiness. Help us get staff that want to build these connections, show up for work, celebrates with people and most importantly, keeps people safe.

Warm Regards, Danielle Salo

Feel free to call 701-290-3023

