

MS or MR Chairman:

My name is Diana Bales

I have 2 developmentally disabled adult ladies living in my home. The agency that I work with is HIT. I am called independent contractor. I have to follow the same rules as a group home, but for the agency, there is no overhead, staff or benefits to worry about, in other words I am cheap! I have been doing this for 17 years. My motivation has never been money, but it is time to address this issue in a practical way. Seventeen years ago room and board for one of the ladies was \$325.00 per month, it is \$375.00 today. I would receive a stipend for my labor. What has happened is, my stipend is now supporting the room and board. I don't have to tell you that the cost of living has gone up over the last 17 years you know that. I have some facts to pass along.

There are 168 hours in a week.

This is the break down of time for the ladies in my care.

HIT has them in their care for 35 hours a week:

They are on the bus for 10 hours per week:

I have them in my care for 123 hours per week:

The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. The stipend I receive for the 2 ladies is less than half minimum wage per hour. A large part of the stipend goes to support the room and board for them. If I get sick I have to hire someone to come to my home and care for them, if I want a day off I have to pay someone to stay with them. If they are to have Christmas or Birthday I am the one to supply it. These are not numbers, these are people and they are the least of our brethren, and but for the grace of God go I.

I won't try to tell you what is fair; you are all practical people you will figure it out. I just ask that something be done, because many of us are at the breaking point. If I can't afford to do this any longer, the ladies will be in a group home, at roughly \$3500.00 per month EACH, think about it.

I do have a question for this board. Some of you are here because of a very expensive education, some because you were elected to an office, some of you were appointed and for some, it's just part of the job. You are being asked to make decisions for a segment of society that you may have no contact with. My question is, have any of you ever done any **DIRECT** care? I ask you to consider this fact, when you listen to those who do have direct care experience, before you make decisions. Most of us in foster care, do it for the love of our fellow man, certainly not to get rich.