Date: January 31, 2023

To: Chair Noor and Members of the Human Service Finance Committee

From:  JIm Zalusky and Julie Swinda (New Journey)

             3607 223rd Ave NE

             East Bethel, MN 55011

Subject:  DWRS, workforce crisis and effects on Family Foster care/FRS homes

Hello, I am a family foster care provider and have been one since 2019.  I live in my own home and care for 2 persons with disabilities.  All of these persons have lived in my family home 4 to 5 years.  Those I care for all have 24/7 needs and medical/behavioral and mental health issues.

I am sending you this letter in support of the Best Life Alliance Legislation.  Family/FRS homes need to be able to pay staff an adequate wage so that we can keep staff and that we can have staff who are qualified.  The current workforce shortage impacts both CRS and FRS homes as we fight to get adequate staff to work in the homes and help care for our people.

Just because we live in our own homes we should not be paid less for staff as we are there working just as hard and most often get very limited time off as we can’t find and keep staff due to the low wages set up in the framework.

Please help us both CRS and FRS providers, improve the services we can provide by improving our rates to find and keep good staff.  We choose to care for those with disabilities, but we did not go into this thinking we could or would not be able to pay staff a wage to keep them working.

Please support the Best Life Alliance Legislation, it is important to all with disabilities.

Jim Zalusky and Julie Swinda, owner

New Journey

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