

To all interested,

As the parent of a multiply disabled adult daughter, I am writing on her behalf and many more individuals who are unable to advocate for themselves. The journey of life with a disabled child has been both rewarding and challenging. Rewarding because of what she has taught us about resilience, determination and love. Challenging because caring for her has been physically, financially and emotionally difficult. She is medically, mentally and physically disabled along with severe speech apraxia.

When my daughter, Beth, was 21 years of age, we lost her father after a difficult battle with cancer. At that time Beth was dealing with a spiral fracture of her tibia and totally confined to a wheelchair. Our home is a multi level and Beth lived in the living room, using a commode...for bathing I would drive her to a friends home with an accessible bathroom. This was a six month ordeal. Due to extreme hypotonia since birth, she now wears a brace from her toes to her hip on that leg. I took care of Beth alone for the next six years, it was difficult and exhausting. When she was 27 years I was able to get her a into group home. As a parent, this was a difficult decision, to trust someone else to care for my multiply challenged daughter, was not easy. I felt it best to transition her while I was still able to help and be present.

ACR homes has a been a wonderful, loving and supportive place for Beth! At the age of 21 Beth began working at Rise in Anoka, she loves this day program! Her life seemed to be on a wonderful track. Change is difficult for her yet she persevered.

In 2021 things in her life began to change. Staffing shortages in her home and at Rise were escalating. COVID changed how we all lived our daily lives. Isolation took a toll on most people. Her day program was no longer an option as we tried to keep this vulnerable population safe from COVID. I was not able to visit Beth, as we wanted to keep her and her housemates safe. We did a lot of FaceTime and prayed that life would return to normal soon.

2022 brought even bigger changes. Beth finally returned to her day program, but for only two days a week, due to staff shortages at Rise. The final blow was when her residential group home had to close due to staff shortages. She now lives in a nursing home setting that combined seven residential homes. She is 36 years old.

Her life has been drastically changed. She has learned the sign for “wait” and we use that word consistently in our communication. We are waiting for help!

We are waiting for change. We are waiting for fair wages for those who care for this vulnerable population. The folks who care for our disabled loved ones need to earn a competitive living wage. Their job is difficult, full of challenging to meet the various needs of the disabled folks in their care.

We need you to support “The Best Life Alliance” proposal! House File 3100/Senate File 2771. If we as a state value Minnesotans with disabilities living full and meaningful lives, our state reimbursement rates have to be set at a level pay for the staff supports necessary to make that

possible. We must increase state set reimbursement and regularly schedule updates to the Disability Waiver Rate System with the aim to increase their wages and benefits.

Thank you for your time and please consider supporting this important proposal.

Janice Holth