

Dear MN Senators and MN House Representatives.

My wife and I are 71 year old parents of our son David who is 36 years old and has lived at home with us since birth. David was born with Cerebral Palsy and Hydrocephalus. He uses a wheelchair, is nonverbal and understands directions and communicates his needs. His feeding and fluid intake are primarily via a stomach G Tube. As we enter March of 2022 it will be TWO years since he was last in his day program at Midwest Special Services in Eagan. He has been there for 10 years not counting Covid disruption of service.

The way his life has been impacted due to staffing shortages of DSP's in program is as follows: He had special relationships with staff at MSS who were skilled and sensitive. His daily routine was disrupted in every way from waking to being transported to program by MSS van and mixing in with participants and having a myriad of activities such as art, music and social skill building with a large variety of staff. In program at MSS he also used a gait trainer that he lost access to for 15 months due to program closure. It's primary benefit for him was assisted walking, and the benefit of bowl bladder and joint compression. He has been able to resume that activity while going through physical therapy for the past 8 months. It's been like starting all over after staff used the gait trainer with him for 7 years. Very fortunately MSS allows us to use their hallways without staff assistance. The responsibility is solely mine for my son.(We have had all 3 of our Covid shots)

The way this has impacted our family is that while we as parents provide his daily cares, he does not have the exposure to dealing with other participants and the staff who he bonded with. His exposure in his immediate community is limited no grocery shopping ,no malls. We walk a lot at Lebanon Hills. Sometimes he gets bored with mom and dad he misses his program you can see him smile as he passes rooms at MSSand hears activity.

In closing I strongly urge our legislature to increase reimbursement rates to support wages and benefit increases for staff working in programs, group homes and for staff working with clients living independently. Given the 1.5 billion dollar surplus of state funds there should be a way of making DSP wages to attract and maintain a work force to assist this needy population. As a former public servant in Ramsey County, I don't have to tell you that hiring, recruitment and ongoing training were always and are the hallmarks to employee retention. We as Minnesotans have always prided ourselves on service to others .YOU have to continue that spirit of stewardship in public service. We are counting on you.

Sincerely Horace, Patricia and David Munoz