January 31, 2023

Dear Chair Noor and Members of the Human Service Finance Committee,

I am writing in support of the Best Life Alliance legislation which makes long-term sustainable investments in the DWRS framework. I started my career in disability services as a direct care professional while I was in college. I did not make a lot of money, but it was comparable to other jobs at restaurants or retail that I was considering. Through this position I was able to gain experience working with individuals with disabilities and it ended up guiding me to a career in the field. How will this happen now? How can we attract direct support professionals when they would be paid considerably less than similar jobs outside the field? What will be the downstream impact in 2, 5 or 10 years when we do not have experience or skilled staff?

Like many businesses, we are in a staffing crisis without a realistic solution. Often we offer wages that exceed what the DWRS indicates, obviously this is not a sustainable model. But we do this because we are responsible to care for vulnerable adults who have no other option. We often must turn away new referrals because we do not even have enough staff to provide services to the individuals we already have agreed to serve. As a state, we need to prioritize services to the most vulnerable, those who are aging and have. The alternatives are neither cost effective nor person centered. My heart breaks for the families who have run out of options and are desperate for support that we just can not provide.

Thank you for considering the Best Life Alliance legislation it is a meaningful step forward for disability services.

Sincerely,

**Brent Krocak**

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