

Dear Governor

This letter is very personal to me as a family member who had to make the choice to place a loved one into a group home and as a Direct Care Giver to the special needs population. In regard to Public Hearing on : H.B.6439 it is cruel that the legislation appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits . Let me explain why this is so important to me.

I would like to start by introducing myself I am April the proud older sister to Crystal she has Rett syndrome, I am also a direct care giver. Crystal is a blessing to my family and has taught us perseverance, kindness, patience's and unconditional love. Thirteen years ago my family had to make a decision to place her in a group home because it was becoming difficult for my parents to care for her. My sister Angel and I did what we could to help out but we both worked full time and it became clear that with our parents health and age we could not continue to give her the 24 hour care she needed or the help our parents needed to keep her home. We found an amazing nonprofit company that has become an extended part of our family. Crystal has thrived in her new home, she loves her room mates and the staff that cares for her. It is difficult to entrust the care of a loved one to people you do not know or trust but we had no choice. What is even harder is getting to know the staff , trusting them , thinking of them as family and having them leave because they can't afford to pay their bills and need better healthcare. Crystal doesn't understand why someone who cares for her , keeps her clean , fed , makes her laugh and makes sure she is safe is gone from her life. She now has to reestablish a new trust and bond with a new person which is not easy for her.

I have worked in this field on and off for over 30 years. I decided to get back into this field and join the company that cares for my sister at this point Crystal was with CRI 5 years and I was so happy with what they did for her I wanted to do the same for others. I currently work in a Day Program I love my clients and give them the care I want my sister to receive. I am sad to say I find myself in the same situation as the previous and current staff who had to make a difficult choice to do what you love knowing you are making a difference or pay your bills. I do not begrudge anyone making a fear wage however when other jobs pay more , offer better benefit's and the work is not as difficult as what you do as a care giver it is frustrating and insulting. The job of a care giver has many layers you offer emotional support, a friendship , you are a teacher , a advocate, you have to give medications be CPR certified, you have to care for clients during illnesses, seizures , you have to be aware of little changes in behavior because not everyone can tell you if they are upset , sick or being hurt by someone, you have to be trained how to handle behaviors and aggression in away that is not threatening or aggressive, you have to use several different types of adaptive equipment, you have to take care of personal hygiene i.e.; change an adults diapers , help shower, brush teeth, get dressed , use deodorant and so much more, if a client is afraid of a Hoyer lift you and another staff are lifting and repositioning a client from a bed to a wheelchair regardless of their size, you are making sure they are a part of the community by going out to socializing and so many other things but most importantly for some of the clients you are the only family and voice they have, how do you say good by to someone who counts on you to be in their life because you need to find a better paying job with better benefit's. We as care givers have one of the most important jobs in this world caring for those who can not care or speak for themselves and we have gone years with out a fare wage and have to make the choose to listen to our hearts or pay our bills. Please as a family that counts on staff to care for their loved one due what is right and support care givers so they can support our family member's and their own family with out having to change professions.

