



KEY HUMAN
SERVICES, INC.

"Advancing the Human Spirit"

Senator Berthel and Representative Polletta,

My name is Dawn Hurley and I am a Service Director for Key Human Services. I have worked for Key for 23 years and started as a Direct Care staff. Fortunately, I have a degree and between that and years of learning on the job I have been able to move up with the agency. For many of our Direct Support Professionals this is not the case. They take care of people and ensure that they have fulfilling lives. These staff deserve to be paid appropriately for the work that they do. The proposal from the CT Non-Profit Alliance would help them to do this. As minimum wage continues to increase, these staff need at least the same increases. It was put into place a few years ago that there should be a differential for these compassionate people who deal with people's lives every day. This differential is getting smaller and smaller each time that the minimum wage goes up. Our staff deserve more and better. If \$15.00 an hour is considered a living wage in Connecticut, then why are these staff still only making \$14.75 an hour? This needs to change and the plan set forth by the Alliance is the way to accomplish this.

When I started as a staff all those years ago, I was making about \$9.50 an hour. Think about that. The minimum start rate has only increased by \$5.00 an hour in over 20 years. Back then there was a \$5.00 differential between what direct care staff were paid and the minimum wage. This is no longer the case and should be. A large portion of that change was made just a few years ago when the start rate was increased to \$14.75. For many of our staff that was a significant increase from \$11.50. The problem is that there has been nothing since, but the minimum wage continues to go up. Soon the minimum wage will reach \$15.00 an hour. What happens then? What about the people who are responsible for other people's lives? How are staff expected to live on this amount when the cost of everything keeps going up? The answer is that they don't. Most of them rely on overtime or have to work multiple jobs. I know that for myself personally, I would not be able to support my family on that what our direct support professionals make.

The direct support professionals are the back bone of our agency. They are the ones in the homes everyday taking care of the people who need them. They showed this through the COVID crisis over the last year. Many of our homes had individuals who tested positive for COVID. The staff continued their work with compassion and never blinked an eye. Some even wanted to continue to work with our individuals who were positive while they themselves were positive. Try to tell me that they do not care and do not deserve more than \$14.75 an hour. How can you compare that to what is required in many minimum wage job?!!

The counter parts to our dedicated staff that work for DDS make significantly more money per hour and see increases on a regular basis. Why is this not the case for those who work for the non-profits? They are doing the same job and should be paid accordingly.

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www.keyhumanservices.org

Key Human Services, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization and an Agency of Keystone Human Services



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Please vote in favor of the legislation set forth by the CT Non-Profit Alliance and support these dedicated staff in making a wage that acknowledges the work that they do and differences that they make in people's lives.

Respectfully,

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