

Teresa and David Eberhardt
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February 26, 2020

Dear Madams and Sirs:

We write to urge your support of **SB0192 & HB0152 with amendments to restore the 2% cut to DDA providers**. This funding is urgently required to enable human service providers to pay direct service professionals an appropriate wage. We are parents of a 30-year old young woman who has autism, developmental disabilities and difficult behavioral issues. Our daughter is supported in her home by The Arc of Howard County. She is supported during the day at Athelas Institute in Columbia, MD.

She is unable to be by herself at any time due to safety concerns. She requires assistance with bathing, dressing, medication administration, preparing meals, doing laundry, personal care and integration into the community. She is not able to read and not able to make phone calls unassisted. She needs constant supervision around food as she will eat raw and frozen meats as well as any other food items in reach.

We have attempted to have her live with two different roommates. Neither arrangement lasted due to her aggressive behavior toward her roommates. Her aggression is both physical and verbal. Her staff must be trained to use a very detailed behavior plan which includes collecting data as well as keeping our daughter safe and others safe. They must be very familiar with the behavior modification steps spelled out in this plan.

Our daughter's staff must also be trained in how to give medications, how to follow her special diet which is gluten and casein free and how to offer nutrition that will allow her to lose weight and be healthy.

Having reliable, competent staff is essential for our daughter. The struggle to obtain and keep staff to support our daughter, especially in the residential program, has been ongoing. Change is extremely difficult for our daughter and frankly trusting our very vulnerable daughter with new people all the time is unnerving.

Adequate funding, such as the funding that was in the Governor's proposed budget **before the BRFA cut**, is essential in helping providers hire and retain much needed staff. The staff caring for people such as our daughter deserve to be paid a living wage. Their work is challenging, personal and essential to very vulnerable citizens in our state. Given the phased-in increase in the minimum wage, the fees paid to human service providers must increase proportionately. The importance of avoiding an unfunded mandate was recognized in the original legislation increasing the minimum wage and it remains a critical need for service providers.

As parents, we have the constant fear and worry as to who will care for our child when we die. She will no doubt outlive us. Without a solid support system made up of dedicated, well trained and fairly paid staff, we fear our child will end up as one of the many marginalized homeless in our society. This is a real fear.

Thank you for your support of [SB0192 & HB0152 with amendments to reject the 2% cut to Developmental Disabilities provider payments and restore the 4% funding increase needed.](#)

Sincerely,

Teresa Eberhardt

David Eberhardt