August 18, 2022

 John P. Smith

 123 Main Street

 Anytown, USA 12345

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear (Enter Senator’s Name)

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and I am the parent/loved one/advocate of a person people with an intellectual /developmental disability (IDD). I am writing to urge your support and action to secure and increase funding through legislative pathways for community-based services in the IDD community, which are vital to the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As you know our nation is facing a direct support professional (DSP) workforce crisis and increased funding will allow organizations to hire more direct support professionals who provide supports that are critical to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities so that they can live fulfilling and independent lives.

Inadequate wages have created a direct support worker shortage. This crisis is so severe that turnover rates among direct support workers average 45% and some providers have been forced to discontinue services due to being unable to find qualified staff. Direct support starting wages, which are tied to Medicaid funding, are far too low. Service providers cannot compete with other businesses that hire at the same level, often with fewer demands. Without quality direct caregivers, our most vulnerable residents are often left without the critical support they need to live meaningful lives.

The DSPs who are committed to serving those in our community often work long hours, yet still struggle to make ends meet. The more devastating result is that with a low workforce, people must wait years on waiting list to have access to resources that allow them to practice their rights as Americans.

I ask that you advocate, support, and encourage fellow legislators to act by securing funding for the DSP workforce and immediately addressing this crisis. In doing so, you can play a huge role in revitalizing the direct care system and show that our government is truly inclusive to all communities.

Sincerely,

Enter your name here