

Please, please support the bill to give support to aging caregivers and direct support professionals.

My son, Ben, has both an intellectual disability (IDD) and mental illness, leaving him with the capacity of between a 3 and 6 year old, although he is 23. He is an amazing guy who works daily in an after school program, giving back to the community as much as possible. His bosses at YMCA are terrific in providing the extra support that he needs to be a good employee. He lives in a townhome with full support. He is active in Special Olympics and The Arc.

What does that look like? I quit my job to start a company (becoming Medicaid certified which took a year) and hire staff that provide 24/7 care for and support to Ben in all his endeavors. I do not take a wage yet work full time. Current funding levels do not cover the wages my staff deserves. Though I am quite frugal. I do all of this to give my son the support he requires to stay out of an institutional level of care, which has been estimated at double the cost to the state.

Plus, I'm 60 and a bone and kidney cancer survivor who no longer can get around as well as before. Imagine me at age 75. I could not set up, fund, or run this company. My son would be living at my home and at high risk for inadequate care or at an institutional placement. Funding DD Waivers keeps people out of institutional care, and actually saves the state money in the long run. Plus, it keeps older parents from trying to care for their adult children and putting themselves at risk of injury.

The only potential flaw I see in this bill is that the SPAL rates need to increase to match the higher rate of pay for direct service providers, ensuring that services are not cut to afford higher priced care. I'm sure you can do a revision for that.

I'm sure you will hear opposition from some parents. That is because they are in situations that are also unfunded or underfunded and this bill will not help them as much as they had hoped. Please understand they are tired and need help. Maybe next session will be their turn.

Please support this bill that is good for Colorado families with adult children with IDD and also good for those who provide their care. Taking care of the caregivers will help get better care for our loved ones.

Feel free to contact me if you would like more information.

Terri Barnhart
Monument, CO 80132