

To: State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee

From: Deborah Badger (HARC, Inc. Employee)

Date: March 2, 2011

#35

Dear CT Appropriations Committee:

My name is Deborah Badger. I am an employee of HARC, Inc, a non-profit organization caring for individuals with special needs. Our mission statement is "to help people with intellectual disabilities and their families enjoy lives of quality, inclusion, and dignity by providing support, education and advocacy." HARC, Inc. has group homes, and day programs including birth to three, module program (for moderate needs and enhancement), life enrichment (for retired clients) along with a supported employment program (in house and job sites). They also have respite program for after hours and weekend support.

I was hired as a job coach in the "life enrichment" program. To be a job coach I had to take classes certified in numerous areas. My trainings included CPR and obstruction, PMT (personal management training) which instructs staff on protecting ourselves, other people and any client having a violent behavior. We also have trainings on neglect and abuse, blood borne pathogens and HIPAA to name a few. We must maintain re-fresher courses to keep our jobs. I also needed to obtain a special license to drive company vans. This included a physical, eye exam, another background check and a higher fee for my license (of which I paid myself).

While I was in the "life enrichment" program there were no personal breaks (except to use the bathroom upon request), due to having to keep a quota of staff to client ratio. This job included making a monthly schedule to use my personal talents to keep clients busy and engaged in an activity. We also had volunteer sites and day trips we travelled to. It also included knowing at least forty clients, their behaviors, allergies along with bathroom and eating needs. I was expected to care for clients personal needs in the bathroom. I will not even go into detail about this. Only by my determination, love for my clients and God's grace I was able to accomplish that.

Many of you here might know me as "the cafeteria lady". I am into my third year as a job coach for the employment center at HARC, Inc... I have five clients who work with me in the cafeteria in this building.

My job is to supervise and instruct my clients to do a job contracted to HARC, Inc. by the present owners of the company running the cafeteria. Sounds simple. Those who know me realize, I am a friend, a co-worker, a supervisor, a mother, a nurse, a hugger, an encourager, a cheerleader and we could go on. However, I am Deborah Badger, I am 52 years old and I earn \$11.68 an hour. I have claimed less than \$20,000.00 for the last five years. Don't get me wrong I am grateful to have a job and I am blessed to work with such dedicated and loving employees(my clients).I am not only y worried about myself but my for every caring person in my shoes. I feel privileged to be able to help and support my clients and their families. Within the past two years my clients have taken at least a two dollar an hour cut in pay due to appropriations. This is really causing a burden that my clients and families do not need. Not only have salaries been cut recently HARC, Inc. has had to close off work job sites due to appropriation of funds. This puts clients out of work and leaves staff scrambling to accept a different position or looking for a new job.

If for one moment, put yourself in my shoes. Better yet, put your feet in the shoes of my clients and their families. If I had more time, I could school you in further detail. I have written this in first person because this is part of MY story. There are thousands of ME out there crying for the same help. I am Deborah Badger I am 52 years old and I ear n \$11.68 an hour. Thank you for giving me the time to shed some light on a huge problem.