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**From:** John Neagle <neaglej@CIBOAKHILL.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 13, 2013 10:03 PM  
**To:** AppropriationTestimony  
**Subject:** saving the safety net

Esteemed legislators,

I cannot stress enough to you the crisis we face as non profit providers of services for people with disabilities. Funding, which you well know, has been woefully under even the cost of living for more than two decades, cannot be cut. The governor's budget, the rescission plans and the longstanding under funding have put us at the care equivalent of the fiscal cliff. Prior years of level or under funding have put administrators to the task of winnowing down the support infrastructure to only the most vital admin and support staffing. There are people carrying case loads that are far less than ideal when it comes to providing seamless and quality supervision, while assuring safety 24 hours a day seven days per week. We are working on fire management only, with hardly the appropriate energy or time to be truly proactive. All divisions are operating too lean to have long term sustainability. Training, support, admin, operations, transportation, etc. are less provocative to think as necessary to the work we do but they are not. They are every bit as vital and when a support division is overburdened, the wheels of care lurch to a halt. We are 'getting it done', but the sustainability of the support staff and administrative supervisors to spin plates as a form of constant management is not realistic. Plates will fall.

The day to day line staff are among the highest paid in the country allegedly, but they work and live in a state that has among the highest costs of living and taxes. Suggesting their pay is adequate by comparing them to workers in Florida is a smoke and mirrors approach that is not reality. They earn good money compared to other vocations, but probably none where the lives of dependent people quite literally hang in the balance at the actions of the worker. They do not run a warehouse; or work in a store; they do not operate machinery; or serve in eateries-where similar compensation might exist. Their work is 'life and death' work. And, our workers realistically need to live proximally near to where they work due to the long and varied hours they work. Many of our group homes are in communities that are fairly "high rent". They don't necessarily choose to live in these towns, sometimes they have to. They work exorbitantly long hours, and many, many of them have two jobs in order just to sustain a living at or slightly above (or below) the classification "working poor". We call them direct service professionals, and demand a necessarily high standard of performance, attendance and care, yet we pay them far less than what the expectations call for. They are fatigued, frustrated and can't go on without a plan for just compensation in sight.

I listed those two people groups in reverse order of importance. The people we care for are dependent. They would not live in group homes if not. Services, activities, staffing ratios, vehicles, overall operations, costs of health care, insurance, programming, not covered medical, goods and services all continue to sky rocket for them just as they are for us. Often times complaints don't come in for reasons related to the disabilities, which makes this worse. The people we serve have been and will in the future see their standard of living sliding downward or collapsing and will be unable to even complain about the changes. Without proper advocacy and without sympathetic ears (yours) they will simply fade into oblivion unless something is done. It's a moral obligation for you to properly fund non profits. It is quite simply a moral obligation. Big lobby really has no place in this discussion. You know the facts and figures, and you just need to spin plates of your own and assure that the safety net is maintained, no-enhanced. That is your legacy. It's time to choose.

John S. Neagle

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