

Dear Sirs and Madames,

I have worked at Horizons, a non-profit agency providing services for those with developmental disabilities in a variety of capacities ever since 2007. I started as a counselor for Summer Camp, then graduated from college and began to work for their Employment Services and during this time also worked for their Supported Living service as well.

I don't do it for the money.

None of my co-workers do it for the money either.

But none of us are compensated fairly.

The quality of support that is offered at Horizons is top-of-the-line. I can say from experience in all sections of the agency. I am honored to work alongside people with such integrity in what they do. They are all good people- the best of the best, and, to put it bluntly, they should be paid more.

Since I began working for Supported Employment I have seen several changes in the program that are directly related to funding. Job sites have been lost- jobs that the individuals we support can be excited about. Support is spread thin. Horizons and its' employees try their very best to provide the best supports they can, but they are very much at their breaking point. They have been for a while. And with the proposed budget cuts, I'm afraid of how the program will suffer. It is not fair to the people we are supporting to short-change them of an opportunity to be important, contributing members of society. And it is not fair to take advantage of the good-intentioned people that are making it all happen.

I love my job. I have learned and grown so much since I began working with people with special needs. They have taught me the most important lessons of my life. It is an impossible thing to explain, but the amount of unconditional love I have received has made me a better person, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind. I wish that everyone could experience what I have. But at the end of the day, everyone has to put food in their stomachs, and the price tag that the government has put on such a beautiful, invaluable experience, makes that impossible.

This is a matter of human rights. My co-workers are some of the hardest working people I know, but they don't deserve to be asked to extend themselves further- no one does. The people we support do not deserve to suffer as a result of not getting the care and support they deserve. The United States of America is a country that prides itself on fairness, but if these proposed budget cuts pass, it is very difficult to see how that is. I love what I do, but I need to earn a living wage. Please reconsider these cuts.

Signed,

Kerry Daigle