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Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for taking the time to hear from me today.

I am here in support of Senate Bill 1135 and in support of raising revenue in our state so we can avoid further cuts and increase funding to vital human services.

My reasons for this are personal. I work as a care giver to people with developmental disabilities. I love what I do, I consider it my calling. However, I work two jobs, and most of my co-workers work at least two or three jobs, just to make ends meet.

Our services in the private non-profit agencies haven't seen increases in over 7 years. As a direct care worker I haven't seen a raise in that time and I only make \$12.25 an hour. I don't even earn \$15 an hour after 10 years of work at the same agency. Turnover at my agency is very high. I believe this committee has the power to raise enough revenue to pay caregivers a decent wage so people can stay in these jobs long term.

Stability in their caregivers is necessary for the men and women I care for to gain greater independence. The people we support need consistent faces who know their special needs and help them improve day after day. High turnover has a negative effect on their lives.

Low wages also means we have a lot of vacant positions. Because of these vacancies workers like me get pulled from the people we are assigned to. Learning and community outing groups are combined and we don't have as many care givers ready and able to give people the attention they need. When this happens the people I care for have more disruptive behaviors as their ability to do more engaging and relevant skill building in their lives isn't possible. I know things can be better. You have a chance to help us improve people's lives by raising revenue to cover these costs.

10 years at a job should mean that I am stable in my career. Yet, I am currently in danger of losing my home. My medical benefits are so expensive I can't afford to go to the doctor. Most of my co-workers don't take our employer's medical plan because it is too expensive. The majority are on the state HUSKY plan to cover their kids and families. Many are on state assistance to feed their families.

I ask you to do everything in your power to raise revenue so that we can properly support caregivers who care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We deserve better. The people we care for deserve better.

Thank you very much for your time.