

August 21, 2007

RE: HB2284

By e-mail

Dear Representative Morrell and Rick Hall:

We are the parents of Michael Ralph, our 25 year old son who lives with us. Michael does not have a diagnosis but requires 24/7 care as he is non-verbal, micro cephalic, has poor gross and fine motor skills, and needs assistance with walking, feeding and toileting. Fortunately his overall health is good. He is very social, loves swimming, music, and being out and about in the community with his peers and others.

Our hours are limited but we are grateful to have Medicaid personal care and family support that so we can hire **casual** care providers to give us a hand in looking after Michael. This help is vital and without it we would be worn out and unable to maintain Michael in our home. We allocate our "help hours" to best fit our son's and our schedule. This means we "cobble together" various hours of coverage by employing anywhere from two to four people over the course of a two week period to make it work.

The care providers that we have employed over fifteen years **have not been career track providers** but a wide variety of people with varying backgrounds who are typically students looking for part time work, or those that have full or other part time employment, or retirees, or family friends and acquaintances. We are not in search of a skill set from a medical services model. We train in great detail on the job incorporating the responsibilities, tasks, our standards and expectations. The current 28 hour training has already created a burden in finding people to fit our "choppy" schedule as they are reluctant to take a job for limited hours that requires a chunk of time for training that is more relevantly done in the home.

The larger the "pool" of people to recruit from the more likely we are able to find someone living within close proximity that wants to help, earn a little extra money and has a schedule that offers coverage when we need it. It is vital for people with developmental disabilities to have more choices and options when addressing their needs. The proposed increase in training hours will limited options and choices and create a gatekeeper to recruiting the casual care provider. We require the **casual care provider**

to be reliable, reside or work in close proximity to our home, and have a good heart. Any increase in the training hours will only compound our challenge.

Please be reminded that there are many wonderful people out there who can and do “fill the bill” as **casual care providers** and who make the difference in our lives and the lives of so many other parents.

Certainly those who are on a care provider career track should have the opportunity to improve their education and skills and advance their careers. But to define parents and those we hire as “long term care providers” requiring the same training hours as the career professional will make our life worse!

With the help of the community we have loved and nourished our son for twenty five years. In large measure it has been the **casual care providers** who are our “community” that have been wonderful for our son and have sustained us. Let us continue with what works by excluding parents and those we hire from the training requirements that lead to certification for the career profession provider. To not do so will only exacerbate the outcome of a one size fits all policy. This will diminish our ability and burden our efforts to maintain, care for, and fulfill our basic role as the **parent** and maintain our home environment for Michael.

Sincerely,

Lois and Ron Ralph

206 547-1443