**JANUARY 2023 LETTERS TO EDITOR**

*Pass the Budget Bill for Wyoming’s Most Vulnerable*

Throughout the state of Wyoming, essential workers in the direct support professional industry serve 2,509 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These professionals make an average wage of $14.88 per hour, which is not enough for the work they do, which includes supporting the needs for individuals with disabilities so that they are able to live a safe, happy, full and productive life. This program would not exist without funding from Medicaid – which is a joint federal and state program – and is more dependent on that funding than any other Medicaid provider group. And while funding currently exists, more is needed and vital. In 2020 this industry took a 2.5% budget cut and during this 2023 legislative session, the supplemental budget bill has been presented to restore that reduction and make more money available for this important workforce and susceptible population. The supplemental budget bill currently also includes an additional appropriation that if passed will provide the ability for providers to pay their DSP’s a better wage than they currently make. If this bill does not pass with these increases, this service could quickly go away and leave thousands of Wyoming’s most vulnerable citizens at risk. We’re asking all Wyomingites to stand up and help make a change by supporting this budget bill. Write your legislator today and let them know how important this supplemental budget is for the direct support industry.

Name, Hometown

*Give Wyoming At-Risk Residents More*

While many industries have seen worker shortages and are facing issues with inflation over the last year, Wyoming cannot afford to lose additional workers who support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as it supports Wyoming’s most vulnerable population. While direct support workers currently care for 2,509 people – and while others are awaiting care – additional funding is needed. Wyoming ultimately needs more funding to keep this program serving citizens throughout the Cowboy State, and to provide care for Wyoming’s most susceptible populations. With this in mind, we’re asking that all Wyomingites stand up and support the new supplemental budget bill that will add additional funding to this workforce, helping keep workers who care for our state’s most vulnerable population.

Name, Hometown

*Pass the Supplemental Budget Bill to Provide Care for Wyoming’s Most Vulnerable Residents*

In Wyoming, we are currently facing a major hardship when it comes to providing care for residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We do not have adequate funding for direct support professionals that serve this vulnerable population and we need our state government and legislators to commit to pass the supplemental budget bill with the increases that are included for DD service providers. Without the passing of this bill with the increases intact – the programs and the work done by these providers will cease to exist as they do now and could easily leave Wyoming residents without necessary and vital care. Currently in the state of Wyoming, direct support professionals serve 2,509 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This program, like many others, struggles to find adequate funding to hire and pay their essential workforce. Some even have as few as zero days of available cash on hand, which means that if any additional funding impacts occur, they could be forced to limit services or even close. If this bill does not pass, they will not be able to pay for the costs of these services and Wyoming Community Service Providers – and other direct support professionals – could close their doors, leaving thousands of Wyoming’s most vulnerable citizens at risk. Don’t let that happen. Support the bill and let’s fund the cost.

Name, Hometown

**DECEMBER 2022 LETTERS TO EDITOR**

*Fund Care for Wyoming’s Most Vulnerable*

Throughout the state of Wyoming, essential workers in the direct support professional industry serve 2,509 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These professionals make an average wage of $14.88 per hour, which is not enough for the work they do, which includes the support needed for individuals with disabilities to live a safe, happy, full and productive life. This program would not exist without funding from Medicaid – which is a joint federal and state program – and is more dependent on that funding than any other group, including hospitals and nursing homes. And while funding currently exists, more is needed and vital. If more funding is not made available for Wyoming Community Service Providers, this service could go away and leave thousands of Wyoming’s most vulnerable citizens at risk. We’re asking all Wyomingites to stand up and help make a change for these workers.

Insert Name, Hometown

*Wyoming Residents Need More*

While many industries have seen worker shortages during the last three years, there is a major shortage of workers who provide support to Wyoming’s most vulnerable populations. While direct support workers currently care for 2,509 people, additional funding is needed. Combine a high turnover rate of 51% and an average wage of $14.88/hour and the result is that Wyoming’s vulnerable populations are without consistent care. Workers at McDonald’s and Walmart make as much – if not more – than these essential workers. Wyoming ultimately needs more funding to keep this program serving citizens throughout the Cowboy State, and to provide care for Wyoming’s most vulnerable. We must do better for these vital workers and the residents they support.

Insert Name, Hometown

*Lack of Funding Exists to Provide Care for Wyoming’s Most Vulnerable Residents*

In Wyoming, we are currently facing a huge hurdle when it comes to providing care for residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There is a huge lack of funding for direct support professionals that serve this vulnerable population – we need our state government and legislators to commit to providing increased funding for this program. Without an increase in funding, the programs and the work done by direct support providers will eventually cease to exist, leaving Wyoming residents without necessary and vital care. Currently in the state of Wyoming, direct support professionals serve 2,509 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This program, like many others alike, struggles to find adequate funding to hire and pay their essential workforce. Some have as few as zero days of available cash on hand, meaning without funding they simply cannot stay open. Without appropriate reimbursements and additional funding to pay for the costs of these services, the work done by Wyoming Community Service Providers could close, leaving thousands of Wyoming’s most vulnerable citizens at risk. Don’t let that happen. Let’s fund the cost.

Insert Name, Hometown