

February 17, 2022

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lauren Thompson, I'm a disability rights advocate from district 45. I have cerebral palsy and I rely on direct support care to survive every day. My mother was my primary caregiver, but she was injured. We couldn't find enough PCAs, so I've had to use facility services most of the time.

The workforce shortage is so widespread that it's hard to know which services would give me the most security. I've been in nursing homes, assisted living, and grouphomes, in addition to PCA services.

Inconsistent staffing leads to inconsistent care. At times I've had to go without a shower, without a clean home, waiting hours for care, unable to make plans, or have a job.

Now I'm safer in a grouphome, but I have no control or privacy. The grouphome manages and documents my care, my food and my activities. There is nothing that I can do without either staff knowledge or consent.

It's so expensive that it uses GRH funding and I am only allowed to have about \$100/month. I haven't found much peace in giving up my personal freedoms. But, for many of us, the workforce shortage has made it so that the only way we get the care we need is to sacrifice our desires and our rights. Please understand that this is not just about restoring jobs, this is about restoring our humanity.

I appreciate being able to talk to you about this today. I would be honored to be able to be part of ongoing conversations, because my life depends on these things.

Thank you,

Lauren Thompson