

Dear Senator Abeler,

I am the owner of a group home in International Falls, MN and have been dealing with all the issues of staffing problems, covid, etc. for many years now. However, I am now more nervous than ever about the near future of my group home. I have had to run the group home using some of our reserves (which are normally to stay put to cover 3 months of bills should anything unexpected come up). My reserves are dwindling and now enough to carry us for only about 1 and a half months. This dipping into reserves has been going on for 2 years now and it cannot continue. The expenses that are killing us right now are the costs of food, utilities, keeping competitive with wages, and insurances. Cyber insurance companies are requiring companies to take costly preventative steps if we are to keep our cyber insurance and on top of that, if you comply, premiums are going sky high. I have had to explain to my residents that we are going to have to make more meatless meals using beans and lentils and more measuring of serving sizes in order to conserve on the soaring food prices. We have turned our heat down, asked residents to take shorter showers, and to turn all lights off when leaving a room. Some residents cried and some are nervous because their cognitive deficits don't allow them to completely understand what is happening. Along with this, each time we increase the staff wages to become competitive, I see signs at fast food restaurants raising their wages. How can we expect people to apply for jobs involving working with body fluids and sometimes unpleasant duties when they can apply for a job working at a till for the same wages? There needs to be a wage differential as compared to fast food restaurants and there needs to be more respect for the people who are so kind as to be willing to work at jobs in group homes. We cannot continue like this and stay open for our residents. The family life our residents hold so dear can easily be ripped apart if I close my doors. One resident may be shipped to the cities, one to Thief River, etc. Do you know how scary that is for them? They need their families and friends around them. It is not like they have much money to do fun things, their circle of people are the one thing they can enjoy. I am begging for your assistance on this. Please call me with any questions at 218-341-5036.

Sincerely,

Roxanne Skogstad-Ditsch  
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