

April 16, 2024

My name is Justin Smith and I live in Roseville, MN. I write in support of the CDCS Amendment to SF 5335.

I am in my mid-twenties and moved into my own apartment two years ago. It took a long time to find a wheelchair accessible apartment, and even longer to receive a housing voucher to make my apartment affordable. I now struggle with what I think is my biggest hurdle of all. How can I live the independent life I want using Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS)? I have been using CDCS with a Developmental Disability waiver since I was about three years old. It offers me the most self-directed option for services. This is what the Olmstead Plan is all about. Sounds great, right?

Nope, because my current budget does not cover the 24-hour awake care that I need, unless I pay people about \$11/hour. Can't do that. This means that my parents get to provide a lot of unpaid care. It also means that I have to spend a lot of weekends at my family home instead of my apartment. Not exactly what I had in mind for independent living.

I would like to ask a question because I simply do not understand. Why does the budget not cover the basic level of staffing I need, at the union-negotiated pay rates? I live on my own, and need staff to give me drinks, feed me, shower, dress me, and help me with all of my personal cares. They help me do the things I need and love to do in my community. Most of my budget goes to staffing, with a little bit to help cover expenses not covered by Medical Assistance, like assistive technology to use my computer.

Time for some math. \$25 an hour covers the enhanced rate for my employees, fees and taxes. Multiply that by 24 hours a day, times 365 days a year. That's around \$220,000 a year. My budget is 62% of that, or \$137,000 a year. If I switch to more traditional provider services or a group home, reimbursement rates for the state would be well over \$350,000 a year.

Funding CDCS budgets, so they're a viable, equitable alternative for those of us who choose this self-directed option, might sound like too much money. If I switch away from CDCS, like many adults with disabilities are forced to do, I will have less flexibility, fewer choices, and it will cost the state far more. I'm hoping that legislation will help fix this. Let's close the barriers to self-directed options.

Thank you,

Justin Smith

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