

March 20, 2023
The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 427
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106

Dear Senator Giessel,

Hi, I'm Sarah Krug and I live in Anchorage, Alaska. I am writing in support of SB 106. I am a care provider, it is my job and my life. I work as a Paraprofessional Educator, in a self-contained SPED classroom. I also work as a Direct Care Provider, under Appendix K, for my son who has an IDD waiver.

As a care provider I provide and document hands-on assistance while also supporting a sense of independence with very personal needs. I assist with tasks such as showering, toileting, teeth brushing, medication, tube feeding, range of motion exercises, position changes, specialized medical equipment and so much more. These supports help people with the basic and essential needs in their daily lives. Care provider jobs require a lot of hard work: physically, mentally and emotionally. These are low paid jobs, with high turnover rates. But, paid care providers are essential to the infrastructure of our society.

I have 3 children that I am raising on my own. Today I want to tell you about Zachary. Zachary is 17 years old and has Cerebral Palsy. He uses a power wheelchair to move and an ipad to communicate. He requires assistance with almost all his daily needs just to survive. My son requires an institutional level of care. But, with the help of care providers, he has the support he needs to thrive.

Before having a child with a disability I attended UAA for Social Work, but Zachary needed a lot of specialized direct care, more than childcare centers could provide. Lack of qualified care providers prevented me from obtaining a college degree and career and continue to limit my ability to work and support my family.

Zachary was on the waitlist for waiver services for 7 years. After getting a waiver we still struggled to find, train and retain care providers. Over the last 10 years, we have had some amazing care providers, and others who just didn't mesh with our family. Working in someone's home or having someone work in your home is a unique and intimate experience. Eventually every care provider we've ever had moved on, which created an environment of uncertainty, and a sense of abandonment for a child who didn't understand why. The revolving door of care providers was very stressful for my family, especially Zachary.

Covid created chaos and devastation, but it also challenged us to reevaluate how things have always been done. Finding different, yet successful, ways of doing things. There is a significant shortage of care providers available. This leaves people without essential care. And families are faced with an excessive burden that comes with caring for a person with a disability. There is no

easy or one size fits all solution, but Appendix K allowed family members the option to be paid for time they work providing care directly for disabled family members. Allowing family members to be paid care providers reduces overall costs of care and keeps people out of expensive institutions and in their homes and communities. We need consistent and quality care providers, and often that is a family member. The stability and quality care that I am able to provide for Zachary has been incredible for his development and goals.

I work and live as a care provider. I am a single mom, I work two full-time jobs and I still struggle to support my family. Being able to be paid for some of the hours that I provide care for my son with Cerebral Palsy has made my family more self-sufficient, reduced our need for financial assistance, and overall been a very positive experience. Disabilities are the only minority group that any of us can become part of at any time. Anyone who might experience: an accident, illness, genetic difference or the effects of aging. These are our children, parents, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers. They are a part of our community. These people matter. We all have a personal stake in the disability community.

Thank you for taking the steps to make Alaska's care system work better for everyone. These policy changes will make a big difference in our community and in the lives of Alaskan's with disabilities. Please support policies that continue to allow people to be paid care providers for family members with disabilities. If you want to know more or have questions, I am happy to continue this conversation. You can reach me via phone call, text or mail.

Thank you for your time,

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