

Dear Legislators

My name is Diane Voss. My son's name is Shawn Voss. Shawn is 26 years old and he continues to struggle with his autism. He now lives in a group home in Hays, Kansas. Shawn is classified as nonverbal. He relies on trained staff who understand his limited communication. Direct support staff is needed on a daily basis to help perform tasks that you and I take for granted such as eating, bathing, dressing, and going out.

Two years ago, Shawn was given the opportunity to have a life away from his parents. He moved to a group home in Hays that houses five other males with disabilities. There has been a continual change in staff ever since. My son is very happy most of the time but due to the limited communication, Shawn struggles to make his wants and his needs known to them. His dad and I know we will not always be here to take care of him. Our hope is for Shawn to be comfortable in his home surrounded by quality staff who are knowledgeable in his needs. We want him to be part of the community giving his best for a wonderful life. He deserves that along with all the other disabled individuals in the community.

I had the opportunity to ask a few of the staff why they were leaving. I was told that the pay wasn't enough to cover their bills. A few of them have other jobs because what they were making in the group home was not enough. As a parent, I want quality staff looking after my loved one. If you had a loved one in a group home, you would want quality staff helping them live their best life too.

More funding is needed to keep trained staff in homes helping these individuals, like my son, achieve that goal! This bill is a practical, common sense approach and solution.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane Creevan Voss". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Diane Creevan Voss