

Hello, my name is Veronica Crawford. I am a Self-Advocate and I work at Care Design NY and lead our Peer Empowerment group. Today I would like to discuss staff turnover and how it is affecting the mental health of people with disabilities. I would like to give people with Disabilities a voice.

Many people with Disabilities live in Residential homes, some live in apartments by themselves and almost all rely on staff support for daily living skills. Staff provide the individuals with maintaining social, emotional, physical and medical needs. Staff also help the individual have a voice and help them advocate for what they want. The staff teaches the individual new skills and resources. People with disabilities need and rely on them for help.

There are just not enough Direct Support Professionals to support people. With only one staff or no staff supporting them they feel

isolated and cannot be a part of the community. One staff member cannot support all the individuals.

During the pandemic even now, people often cannot go to a program or leave the house to go out in the community due to lack of staff. They have no social interaction the staff help to provide. Being by yourself or in your home is a struggle for many people. This left the individuals feeling isolated. This increased anxiety causes many unwanted behaviors and increases mental health concerns.

People with disabilities see their staff as a valuable resource. The staff are there to help them live a good quality of life. We want people with Disabilities to be a part of the community and have new experiences, learn and feel a part of the world. and have good mental health.

Increasing hourly wages for DSPs would decrease staff turnover and promote positive everyday life for the individuals they support. I would like everyone to consider adding a 4000-wage increase for the Direct Support professionals that assist the Disability community every day. I would like this to be added to this 2023 budget.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and I hope you can be a voice for the DSP Staff and the Disabilities community. Thank you for your time and listening.

Sincerely,

Veronica Crawford

Self Advocate

Care Design NY

