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Fri Feb 4 2005

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stacey Bray, I work at Opportunity Resources as a Supported Living Coordinator in Missoula. I am pleased to be given an opportunity to speak with you this afternoon on behalf of the individuals I work with. I work with individuals with disabilities that range from physical to developmental. I do a wide variety of activities with each of these individual from direct care to balancing their check books. On a daily bases I strive to encourage independence, a good quality of life and an opportunity to enhance the abilities and skills that they poses.

With this is mind we encounter many struggles trying to provide the quality of life that these individuals deserve. Each year the number of the individuals in need increase yet our funding does not. This means that we need to cut valuable staff hours from the very people that need it the most. We are already operating at the bare minimum needed to ensure a good quality of life. The staff work for little money and work many hours and yet the individuals needs are barely meet due to the lack of funds for the budget. We should each tip our hats and take a moment to appreciate all the hard work and the heart that each of the staff put into each day.

Each individual that we service has the right to have a life that is meaningful and to do all the things that are important to them. This means more than just having enough support hours for their basic needs like showering and meals prep. Like you and I they have goals, wishes, hopes and dreams. These are obtainable and realistic. It is amazing all that gets done with the few hours that each individual is receiving. It is a priority for all who work with each of these individuals to see them succeed in life.

There are so many different areas where funding is needed. Health care, Medicaid, Housing, Staffing, Medication, Trainings, Community Supports, Work and so much more. In the long run more funding now will cost less in the future because we are addressing their need immediately and teaching the skills needed for independence. Please consider giving more funding to programs like mine to give more to the individuals I work with.

I love my job and look forward to see that smiles and accomplishments of each of my individuals. Thank You for giving me a moment to voice my concerns.