



Easter Seals Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain, Inc.

Regional Service Center

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Rep. Ron Ehli, Chairman
Joint Health and Human Services Appropriations Sub-Committee
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Chairman Ehli and members of the committee:

Good morning. My name is Laurel Gebo, the Director of Adult and Community Services at Easter Seals-Goodwill Northern Rocky Mountain based in Great Falls. We provide supported living, supported employment, day program and transportation services funded by the Developmental Disabilities Program to approximately 150 individuals.

Over the past four years Easter Seals-Goodwill has seen a decrease in revenue in the programs of over nine percent (9%). We have absorbed this loss of revenue while maintaining service integrity by deferring expenditures for infrastructure, such as vehicle repairs and replacements, business technology and building upgrade. This infrastructure is essential to meet program requirements such as transporting participants safely, utilizing mandated computer databases and providing facilities that meet the increasing accessibility and support needs of an aging population of adults with significant disabilities.

In addition, we have not been able to increase the entry-level wage for our direct support staff. This wage falls below the poverty guidelines for a two-person household and directly impacts our ability to recruit qualified staff to provide these essential services. For example, in the past month we posted an opening for staff in our supported living program and have only one applicant. Minimal cost-of-living increases necessary to retain current staff have further eroded our ability to cover fixed costs subject to inflation factors and those previously mentioned deferred expenses. Also, you heard on Tuesday another staff member explain our projected employee health insurance cost increase, required by the Affordable Care Act.

Without a provider rate increase that helps us keep pace with our cost of doing business, our ability to continue to provide services in a safe and effective environment will continue to be negatively impacted. We ask that you support a significant provider rate increase in House Bill 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony today.

Laurel Gebo, Director
Adult and Community Services