**DECEMBER 2022 LETTERS**

**REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear Representative [insert name],

As you may know, there is a vulnerable segment of Wyoming’s population who need additional financial support. As a resident of Wyoming, I’m writing to request that as you enter the next legislative session, you take these vital needs into consideration and allot additional funding to better support and compensate Direct Support Professional throughout the state. If funding changes are not made quickly, these programs will continue to lose staff and operate off a shoe-string budget, all while leaving more people with intellectual and developmental disabilities without adequate care.

Throughout the great state of Wyoming, essential workers in the direct support industry currently serve 2,509 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and acquired brain injuries, while additional clients are still awaiting care. It’s been an ongoing struggle to fund and adequately pay this vital workforce, as well as retain them with an average turnover rate of 51% and an average hourly wage of $14.88.

At the present time, every person Direct Support Professionals serve receives Medicaid and the members of Wyoming Community Service Providers are supported by clients on Medicaid to the tune of 90% or more. Medicaid – which is funded by federal and state dollars – is a vital part of the services these programs and workers offer. In fact, this program would not exist without this funding and is more dependent on it than any other Medicaid provider group, including hospitals and nursing homes.

If additional funding is not allocated, the programs and providers could quickly evaporate, leaving thousands of Wyoming’s most vulnerable residents without care. As you prepare for this year’s legislative session, please go into it knowing that there is an important segment of Wyoming that needs more – more care, more funding and more commitment.

Sincerely,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]

**SENTATOR SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear Senator [insert name],

With Wyoming’s positive revenue outlook, it’s time to invest in things that matter. There is a vulnerable segment of Wyoming’s population – residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities – who needs additional support.

Currently, there are 2,509 people of varying abilities who receive care from Direct Support Professionals throughout Wyoming.

Direct Service Providers help provide care and support for these individuals, and the programs and essential workers allow them to live a safe, happy and productive life. Workers help clients with the basics of life, including hygiene, grooming, bathing, preparing meals, cleaning, assisting with medications, budgeting, shopping, teaching skills for independence, taking them to medical appointments, documenting health changes and more. Any task or help that is needed, these skilled workers show up day after day. The knowledge and skills that are required to be an effective Direct Support Professional are extremely high. It’s also a profession that is underpaid (to the tune of an average wage of $14.88/hour) and has a high turnover rate of 51%.

Today, I’m writing to ask that as you enter this year’s legislative session, don’t forgot this vital part of Wyoming’s population. This program – and these Wyoming residents – need additional funding. Increasing the budget will allow these essential workers to earn at least a living wage and grow this career field to provide care for all Wyoming residents who need it.

As you hear budget requests and make important decisions in Cheyenne this year, please hear and thoughtfully consider what this program, these workers and this important part of Wyoming’s population needs – more care, more funding, and more commitment from Wyoming.

With respect,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]

**JANUARY 2023 LETTERS**

**REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear Representative [insert name],

As you know, there is a vulnerable portion of Wyoming’s population who needs additional financial support. As a resident of Wyoming, I’m writing to request that during this legislative session, you choose to support the budget bill that will allocate additional funding to better support and compensate Direct Support Professionals throughout the state. If the budget bill is not passed with the current levels of funding for DD providers, these programs will continue to lose staff and operate off a minimal budget, leaving more people with intellectual and developmental disabilities without adequate care.

Throughout the state of Wyoming, essential workers in the direct support industry currently serve 2,509 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and acquired brain injuries, while additional clients are still awaiting care. It’s been an ongoing struggle to fund and adequately pay this vital workforce, so again we’re asking for your support.

During the 2020 crisis, this workforce encountered a 2.5% reduction in funding. Through the current budget bill, this funding would be restored, which will allow for individuals with extra needs the on-going care they need. Also included in the supplemental budget is an increased appropriation that if passed, would provide the ability for providers to pay their Direct Support Professionals a better wage than they currently make. If the increases to DD providers are not included in supplemental budget, programs and providers could quickly evaporate, leaving thousands of Wyoming’s most vulnerable residents without care. As you vote on change and vote for or against the budget during this legislative session, please go into it knowing that there is an important segment of Wyoming that needs this to pass.

Sincerely,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]

**SENTATOR SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear Senator [insert name],

During this legislative session and with Wyoming’s positive budget outlook, it’s time to pass bills that matter. There is a vulnerable segment of Wyoming’s population – residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities – who needs additional support.

Currently, there are 2,509 people of varying abilities who receive care from Direct Support Professionals throughout Wyoming.

Workers in this field help clients with the basics of life, including hygiene, grooming, bathing, preparing meals, cleaning, assisting with medications, budgeting, shopping, teaching skills for independence, taking them to medical appointments, documenting health changes and more. Any task or help that is needed, these skilled workers show up day after day. The knowledge and skills that are required to be an effective Direct Support Professional are extremely high.

Today, I’m writing to ask that you support the increases that are contained in the supplemental budget specific to providers of developmental disability services in this year’s legislative session. This program – and these Wyoming residents – needs additional funding and if the increases aren’t included in the supplemental budget bill, Wyoming service providers will continue to lose staff and operate off a shoe-string budget, leaving more people with intellectual needs without adequate care.

As you vote on bills in Cheyenne this year (including the supplemental budget bill), please hear and thoughtfully consider what this program, these workers and this important part of Wyoming’s population needs – more care, more funding, and more commitment from Wyoming.

With respect,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]