

# Dear Michigan policymakers,

**please approve funding to support a major increase in Direct Care wages so I can stay in my home.**

My name is Fred White. I am 52 years old, a voting Michigan resident and one of your constituents, currently living in an independent living setting only made possible if I have 24/7 caregiver support.

My appeal to you today is submitted vicariously through my parents, as I was diagnosed with a severe cognitive disability at the age of four, resulting in minimal verbal or written communication capability. These lifelong challenges, however, do not mean that I don't have personal goals and objectives, feelings and desires....just like any other person.

Due in part to the Home & Community Based Settings Final Rule (HCBS) and support from my parents, in 2019 I was able to move from a licensed group home to an independent living setting. Living in an independent living setting was—and is—important to me as it gives me “choice” in everyday living experiences that most people without a disability take for granted. Continuing to live in an independent living setting, however, is only possible if I have 24/7 caregiver support, which is the basis for me submitting this appeal.

The challenge is this. The HCBS final rule is an unfunded federal mandate where implementation and funding was left as the responsibility of each state. So, even though the intentions and purpose of the HCBS final rule are admirable and desired, without adequate state funding I am left with unintended but real-life consequences that put at risk the intended outcomes of HCBS and jeopardize my ability to continue to live in my home.

**You are well aware of the ongoing caregiver staffing crisis which, due to years of underfunding the pandemic and an ongoing increase in caregiver demand, is now at a catastrophic state.** Due to the staffing shortages, there are times when the caregiver staff I do have work double shifts and the turnover of staff is such that I often don't recognize the new face that wakes me up in the morning, showers me, and attends to my personal needs. Many times, my 75-year-old parents have to take me to their house when there are gaps in the staffing schedule that cannot be filled.

This is not a problem that rests with the agency that provides me staffing. It is a systemic problem that extends to every disabled person across Michigan who relies on caregiver support. **The fact is, the catastrophic state of caregiver support for disabled individuals has reached a point where the health and safety of disabled adults are being put at risk!**

**So, my personal appeal is please approve funding in the pending budget that will support a healthy increase in Direct Caregiver wages, as well as for support staff, so I can continue to live in my home.**



Respectfully, Fred White  
on behalf of myself and others