

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor Walz Addresses DSP Wage Gap in Budget Proposal

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (February 20, 2019) – Today, the Best Life Alliance, a nonpartisan, statewide coalition of more than 130 organizations, people with disabilities, families and supporters advocating for Home & Community-Based Services (HCBS), issued the following statement on Gov. Walz’s budget proposal from its chair Judy Marder, parent of an adult child with disabilities who receives community-based services and supports:

“We are pleased Gov. Walz included in his budget proposal a competitive wage factor for better wages for the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who empower my daughter to live as independently as possible. This would begin to address the 17 percent wage gap between the Direct Support Professionals and other similar professions and is a critical step in stabilizing this incredibly important workforce.

“The Best Life Alliance is dedicated to working diligently with Governor Walz, his administration, and the legislators from both parties who are prioritizing better wages and benefits for DSPs and addressing the overall workforce crisis in home and community-based services. Their efforts are an acknowledgement of both the value of these talented professionals and the tremendous work they do, but also the value of people who require a different set of supports to live their best lives and contribute to their communities.”

HCBS services support more than 30,000 people with disabilities in Minnesota to live as independently as possible in small group or individual settings, as well as participate in community employment and enrichment activities. Organizations delivering these supports employ more than 100,000 DSPs but have seen a dramatic increase in turnover rates, position vacancies, and overtime costs due to increased demand for services, a shrinking pool of workers, and wages which have fallen behind similar professions by 17 percent, according to a recent Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The Best Life Alliance is advocating for a “competitive workforce factor” to increase the part of Medicaid waiver reimbursement rates dedicated to DSP wages, and a more frequent rate adjustment based on Bureau of Labor Statistic data. These are critical as more than 95 percent of all expenses in the sector are covered by Medicaid.

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Best Life Alliance is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition of more than 130 organizations, people with disabilities, families and supporters advocating for Home & Community-Based Services. These essential services include training and employment programs, crisis respite services, group homes, Personal Care Assistance (PCA), and other services that allow people with disabilities to stay healthy, active, and independent.

Webpage: bit.ly/BestLifeMN

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