



Building Resources for Individuals with Disabilities to Gain Equality

DR. MATTHEW SPROWL'S SPEECH

September 27, 2018

It's a wonderful opportunity to be here today and share some thoughts and concerns.

First, I take this moment to thank Director John Martin for his hard work and dedication throughout his career in the service of others. Our life paths crossed a few years back when I was invited to collaborate with Senator Peggy Lehner, Director Martin and folks from Ohio Medicaid. Together we were able to establish a residential respite pilot project for autistic youth with extremely aggressive behaviors. Our paths crossed again when I called John's office May 2017 asking for an emergency admission to the Columbus Developmental Center as my son's behaviors were no longer manageable at home. John's staff moved in a timely fashion securing admission and safe refuge for our son who was too old to be admitted to the residential center that had recently opened. Our family could no longer keep our son home as the 2 direct support providers who had helped us resigned. One was burnt-out and the other sought a better paying job. That resulted in my wife covering 95 hours weekly and I did my best to run a medical practice and help at home.

This is the unifying issue that we all face. Everyone here needs some type of provider assistance in order to function fully at home and in the community. It may be help with activities of daily living, medications, assistance with meals or going into the community to shop and run errands.

The national and state impetus has been to move individuals with disabilities from institutional settings into the community. However this paradigm cannot function the way it was intended without adequate community provider support.

The economy has picked up since the Great Recession resulting in historically low unemployment rates and more jobs available than employees to fill them. The limited candidate pool, and greater competition from other businesses and industries that offer better compensation have made it more difficult to find suitable direct support provider candidates.

The market forces that have led to growth in the private sector resulting in better wages are not a factor in the public sector. Fiscal increases for direct support providers are voted on by the legislature as part of the budgetary process. We must implore our legislative body to increase the dollars that help the disabled. If federal and state governments want the disabled out of institutions and into the community they must fund this process adequately.

At this time there are not enough providers and the turnover rate in 2017 was 61% due to long hours worked, high accountability for actions, feelings of isolation and inadequate wages.

Many parents I've met express that one of their biggest fears is who is going to take care of my son or daughter when I'm elderly and unable or when I pass?

In a speech given by Hubert Humphrey he stated

It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children, those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

We are no longer in the shadows. Many have advocated for the disabled and many more join their ranks.

We need to shine a bright light on this issue and demand that elected officials have the integrity to vote a budgetary increase for waiver services. This is the bridge that closes the gap and provides the means for effective and meaningful community-based support.

Thank you.

