

Good morning,

My name is Jill Gerrie, and I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about Senate Bills 790 and 791. I work for The Arc Michigan, a 73-year-old organization dedicated to improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families. We advocate for state and federal policies informed by firsthand insight into disability rights and supports, while our 28 local chapters around the state provide direct services.

The Arc Michigan believes everyone, whether they have a disability or are aging, is entitled to live in their own home. This requires well-trained, properly compensated caregivers. I have worked 45 years in this field and have never experienced a home care worker crisis of the magnitude we are experiencing now. Families and people with disabilities we talk to daily are desperate because they cannot find staff. People are waiting years for in-home support and services, putting them at risk of institutionalization, hospitalization, and worse.

We know the high turnover rate and shortage of home care workers is due to low pay. Wages and benefits have been an issue for years and the system will not right itself or it would have done so by now. SBs 790 and 791 are critical to provide some relief for people with disabilities and their families. These bills would provide a structure to the care system that is sadly lacking.

We find that the most effective policy is constructed in collaboration with people living with developmental disabilities and their family members. That's why we are actively calling for the state authority to promote skills and training and the adequate compensation required for recruiting and retaining quality professionals.

The persistent lack of a system of comprehensive community long-term support is a crisis requiring an immediate solution that a statewide authority can provide. The Arc Michigan urges you to pass SBs 790 and 791.