

OUR CARE CAN'T WAIT

Develop your Message

TALKING POINTS OUTLINE

1. Thank you

- Thank them for meeting with you
- Introduce who you are and your role (a person who uses Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), a family member of an adult who uses HCBS, a family member or parent of a minor child who uses HCBS)

2. Issue

- Why do **you** care so much about the Direct Care Provider shortage that you are willing to do something about it?

3. Why it matters to Everyone

- Describe the problem

4. What my life is like because of the staff shortages

- Give real life examples that you or your loved one have experienced
- What isn't working

5. What my life is like when staff is available

- Give real life examples of what your life looks like when you have the staff you need
- What are some ways to fix the problem?

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6. What is your reaction to my story

- Do you see this as an issue? How have you seen it in your district?
I hope you can agree there is a problem with...

7. What I want you to do

- I am asking for your help to prioritize the direct care shortage. Increasing wages is the first step to help us solve the direct care workforce crisis. It is also important that direct care workers are well trained and have ongoing training.
- Please read the report “Sustainability of Idaho’s Direct Care Workforce” from the Office of Performance Evaluation.
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/ope/reports/r2202/>

8. Thank you

- Say thank you
- Offer to connect them to people who can give them more information about this issue
- Offer to be a resource to them for disability issues that they need input on

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Example Letter/Emails

Example 1: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is _____ and I live in _____.

I (my son or daughter, mother or father) receive services paid for through Medicaid's Home and Community Based Services. These services support me (her, him, or them) with _____ (it is important to be very specific about the kind of support you need to live your life such as: they help me take my medication, they help me get in and out of bed, they help me keep my catheter clean, they help my child learn ways to manage their anxiety, they help my child socialize with other children, they help me do my grocery shopping, they help me make my meals, they help me take a bath, they help me use the toilet, etc. Don't use jargon or acronyms)

All these services, called Home and Community Based Services are provided by direct care workers paid for by Medicaid. Home and Community Based Services are the most cost-effective way to support people with disabilities and seniors, and help people avoid unwanted institutional living.

You may have heard about the crisis happening all over Idaho for people with disabilities, seniors, and families because there is a huge shortage of direct care workers.

I would like to tell you how the direct care workforce shortage has impacted me or my family member.

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Example 2: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is _____ and I live in _____.

There have been at least 10 times over the past year staff has not been available to provide in- home support for me. I need help getting in and out of bed, help preparing my meals, help to bathe, dress, and use the toilet. I can't do these things without physical support. Because staff have been unavailable, I have slept in my wheelchair overnight too many times to count. When this happens, I can't use the toilet or get to water or food. Because I am unable to reposition myself in my wheelchair, I am left in one position for hours. When that happens, I'll very likely develop pressure sores. I will probably have to go to the hospital and fight off an infection because of the pressure sores that could kill me. Hospitalization costs more than if I were to have services provided in my own home.

I am asking for your help to prioritize the direct care shortage. Increasing wages is the first step to help us solve the direct care workforce crisis. It is also important that direct care workers are well trained and have ongoing training.

Please read the Sustainability of Idaho's Direct Care Workforce that the Office of Performance Evaluation completed in 2023.

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Example 3: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is _____ and I live in _____.

I need help getting from my apartment to the community to do my grocery shopping, get money from the bank and visit my family and friends. This means I need help to schedule my appointments, get transportation set up, and make sure my staff can assist me while I'm doing these things because of my seizures. I am unable to do these things without the assistance of staff. Because staff are often unavailable, I have missed medical appointments and have not been able to pick up my prescriptions. I have run out of food because I haven't been able to get to the store. I cannot afford a delivery service. I cannot see my friends and family as often as I want because I do not have the staff support. I have to prioritize my medical, pharmacy and grocery store needs, so even when I have staff, I am not able to do much that is fun. I am lonely and afraid for my future if this keeps up.

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Example 4: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is _____ and I live in _____.

I am the parent of an adult son with a developmental disability. I have had to cut the hours I can work at my job to provide support to my son. He cannot be left alone due to safety reasons. He needs help with bathing, dressing, eating, and support walking. Because of the direct care workforce shortage there is not staff available to provide this level of support for the past three years. Because I have had to work less outside of the home my family has lost \$30,000 a year in our household income. My son also does not want to spend all of his time with his mother and misses the time he had to socialize with other people his own age. I am not able to do all of the things the direct care workers were able to support him to do because of all of the other responsibilities I have with my other children.

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Example 5: SAMPLE ONLY – please do not use as your letter

Thank you for meeting with me.

My name is _____ and I live in _____.

My mom gets help from Medicaid to live at home. She had a stroke and went to a nursing home until she was released back to her home. When she was first released, she had helpers to take her shopping, help her get up and dress, help her get around, help her get around, and help her fix meals and remember to take her medications. I help as much as I can. We live about ten miles from her, and I check on her every day. I also work full time and have my own family including three kids under the age of 14. Mom was doing pretty well until her workers started not showing up. I had to take time from work to call the agency and try to find help for her. When the agency could no longer find workers, my mom lost her Medicaid home support workers. I set timers to call her and remind her to take her many medicines. She doesn't always answer the phone because she can't hear very well. She can't use an answering machine or smart phone. There is no one who can help her get dressed in the morning. Often when I stop by after work, she is still in bed and very sad. I do her shopping and pick up her medicines. She is frustrated that she can't get out and do things herself with her workers anymore. She is not doing well. We don't have a big enough house to move her in with us. I'm worried she will fall or have another stroke because she misses her medicines. I'm worried she'll end up stuck in a nursing home or worse – all because she doesn't have helpers anymore.

I'm asking that you care about my mom and other people who are having the same problems. Please help Medicaid get enough money to pay these valuable workers who help seniors stay in their own homes and the towns that they love. Direct care workers need higher wages so they can afford to keep helping people like my mom. Direct care workers also need good training, so they know how to help people stay safe and happy.

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