

From: Mary Schluter <schluter81@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 12, 2023 8:45 AM
To: Clerk/BOS
Subject: Letter for review 12-12-23 Board Meeting
Attachments: IHSS profile for Fresno Co Board of Supervisors Dec 2023.docx

CAUTION!!! - EXTERNAL EMAIL - THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

Hello,

I am an IHSS Care Provider. Can you please present the attached letter to the Board of Supervisors to review during their meeting today so they may consider my concerns?

Thank You
Mary Schluter

Three concepts: Appreciate, Be Aware, and Support Service for Those Who Need Care

By Mary Schluter, In-Home Support Service Care Provider since 2014

Concerns: Dropping Kaiser Permanente Healthcare Benefits; Denying cost-of-living wage increases

IHSS CARE PROVIDERS - Who are we? Someone to **APPRECIATE**. We could be anyone, someone you might know, a stranger you pass, or maybe one day . . . even you! You never know when you might be needed to give short- or long-term care to a family member. You may need to receive it yourself one day. Our health and wellbeing is not promised, only borrowed. Our financial position can shift unexpectedly. Often a care providing position is thrown upon us unexpectedly when a loved one takes ill, is injured, insurance coverage runs out, or doesn't cover long term care in a facility. What do people do when they need care in their home? Can't afford expensive assisted living facilities? Don't need "skilled nursing" but need help with all activities of daily living? They call an IHSS Provider. We provide an indispensable service to those who need it most. We give back to the community by helping to maintain the dignity and quality of life for the elderly and disabled in our neighborhoods. One thing is true of all of us, we are all caring individuals who want to meet people's care needs in their home and community. Living at home, instead of a facility, *increases* the quality of life for the individual and *decreases* costs for *everyone*.

Please BE AWARE that the work we do is widely varied, and we bring a vast amount of talent and experience to a job that requires an incredible amount of patience. We come from many walks of life, some are very educated, some with much life experience. In essence, we carry out the tasks of personal chefs; dieticians; nursing assistants; speech, occupational and physical therapy assistants; activity planners; financial planners; medication managers; counselors; chauffeurs; professional housekeeping; personal shoppers and ultimately, first responders. Our wage does not reflect our service.

SUPPORT SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO NEED CARE by supporting the objectives of IHSS to provide a consistent, quality workforce. If IHSS providers must leave their positions to seek better wages it requires recipients to seek new caregivers. An increase in turnover decreases quality of care and reduces the effectiveness of resources spent. In order to provide consistent service we need a living wage, which according to Work Stream (workstream.us/wage-index) and Living Wage Calculator (livingwage.mit.edu/counties), " . . . for Fresno County California is \$17.67 per hour for a single adult with no children."

ADDITIONALLY, our healthcare benefits are equally important. Providers need to be healthy in order to provide quality care to others. We should not be asked to give up the healthcare benefits that we have had access to for years. We have tolerated up to a 2-year waitlist which is a hardship for many. The proposal to take away Kaiser Permanente Healthcare benefits for IHSS care providers so that we can access Medi-Cal is inappropriate because it requires our wage to be near poverty level in order for us to access Medi-Cal. We deserve a living wage that does not keep us dependent on Medi-Cal healthcare. Some of us will not qualify for Medi-Cal because of other circumstances, and the cost of healthcare may jeopardize our ability to pay our rent or mortgage. This makes our housing insecure. When you reduce the benefits of the people that do the caregiving, you also reduce the quality of life for those who receive the care.

Investing resources into IHSS wages and health benefits in Fresno County increases quality of life and results in money being filtered back into the communities within Fresno County. Providers spend their money here.

Please continue to maintain the Kaiser healthcare benefits and consider appropriate cost-of-living wage increases. THANK YOU