



To the Editor:

I am writing to you as a Director of a Day Habilitation Program for St. Lawrence NYSARC. More importantly, I am writing to you as a friend and family member of individuals with developmental disabilities. I love the job I do and the men I work with every day. I feel my staff are the most competent and caring individuals a work site like ours has to offer anywhere in the State of New York. Every day, my staff and I come to work and spend eight hours trying to ensure the happiness, safety, and security of the men we serve. This is not an easy job, but we have dedicated our lives to supporting people.

What is most disheartening to me is hearing that men and women who work at fast food restaurants will soon be seeing a wage of \$15 per hour. I don't begrudge others for bettering their situation, but increasing the rate of pay for fast food workers to such a high standard will make keeping our staff almost impossible!

The men I serve depend on their current staff members, all of whom have been at St. Lawrence NYSARC for five years or more. I know that this will change once the wage increase for fast food workers starts, which will test our ability to provide meaningful and fulfilling services.

In short, I hope all of you understand what a significant moment this is for the disability field. To say it bluntly, we are basically at the mercy of our legislators! Please help us do our job – to help people that need us the most! Please support a State-funded increase for Direct Support Professionals in nonprofits like St. Lawrence NYSARC.

Joe Montgomery

