



To the Editor:

I am writing to ask our legislators to fund a wage increase for direct support professionals who work at nonprofits, like St. Lawrence NYSARC. It bothers me that that a wage increase for fast food workers has been passed, while direct support staff members are not compensated at the same level.

I used to work in retail, so I am familiar with the work and know it can be challenging. It just appears that the work done by staff who are caring for other peoples' livelihoods has been neglected and forgotten by the government. I work for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at St. Lawrence NYSARC and many of our staff are leaving because of the wages.

St. Lawrence NYSARC provides for 750 individuals with disabilities. My job is to help people learn and achieve their GOALS, not to mention safely SURVIVE in the community. Our jobs are not easy and it makes it more difficult when we don't have or can't keep staff to maintain the quality of care.

I am a single mother, working three jobs just to make ends meet. This fair wage compensation issue matters to me because I love my job and what I do and I can't imagine leaving it! People are depending on direct care staff to provide consistent care and support, but staff members need to support their own families as well.

Compensating direct support professionals at \$15 per hour would allow people to meet their family's needs, while allowing staff to keep working to support fulfilling lives for people with intellectual disabilities. I really believe we deserve higher pay - to help all of us keep our jobs, to help provide for everyone, and so that we may all live the life that we are supposed to!

Abigail Powers

