

July 27, 2021

Good afternoon members of the Frontline Worker Pay Work Group:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of ARRM, a trade association representing over 130 member organizations and the almost 30,000 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) that those organizations employ.

For more than 15 months now, the already depleted and exhausted DSP workforce has shown up, risking their own personal health and safety, to provide critical care and vital support to Minnesota's disability community.

Throughout the pandemic, DSPs heeded the call to step up to the front lines and continue providing world-class care to help individuals with disabilities live their best lives. When disability day services were forced to shut down, DSPs that provide support to people at home worked extra shifts and longer hours, with some even moving into an individual's home for weeks at a time to mitigate the threat of spreading the virus.

According to ARRM's 2020 Industry Survey, DSPs on average earn a little over \$14 an hour. Our DSP workforce has a turnover rate of 42% with a current vacancy rate of almost 20%. These industry pressures, compounded with a global pandemic make the DSP workforce a deserving recipient of a portion of the frontline workers bonus pay.

During the 2021 1st Legislative Special Session federal dollars were used to move up an already scheduled rate increase for HCBS Waiver Services by six months. These dollars will be critical to increase DSP wages going forward, however, while Personal Care Assistants (PCAs), who provide similar support to people with disabilities, received temporary wage increases throughout the pandemic, similar resources did not extend towards the Direct Support Professional workforce.

As state legislators and the Governor consider recipients for the Frontline Worker Pay funding, ARRM is proud to advocate for our frontline heroes and the exemplary, critical care they provide to Minnesotans with disabilities through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Sue Schettle, CEO

Sara Grafstrom, Director of State and Federal Policy

