

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. CON. RES. 21

Expressing the sense of the Congress that community inclusion and enhanced lives for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities is at serious risk because of the crisis in recruiting and retaining direct support professionals, which impedes the availability of a stable, quality direct support workforce.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 13, 2003

Mr. BUNNING (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that community inclusion and enhanced lives for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities is at serious risk because of the crisis in recruiting and retaining direct support professionals, which impedes the availability of a stable, quality direct support workforce.

Whereas there are more than 8,000,000 Americans who have mental retardation or other developmental disabilities;

Whereas individuals with developmental disabilities include those with mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, epilepsy, and other related conditions;

Whereas individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities have substantial limitations on their functional capacities, including limitations in two or more of the areas of self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency, as well as the continuous need for individually planned and coordinated services;

Whereas for the past two decades individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities and their families have increasingly expressed their desire to live and work in their communities, joining the mainstream of American life;

Whereas the Supreme Court, in its *Olmstead* decision, affirmed the right of individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities to receive community-based services as an alternative to institutional care;

Whereas the demand for community supports and services is rapidly growing, as States comply with the *Olmstead* decision and continue to move more individuals from institutions into the community;

Whereas the demand will also continue to grow as family caregivers age, individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities live longer, waiting lists grow, and services expand;

Whereas our Nation's long-term care delivery system is dependent upon a disparate array of public and private funding sources, and is not a conventional industry, but rather is financed primarily through third-party insurers;

Whereas Medicaid financing of supports and services to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental

disabilities varies considerably from State to State, causing significant disparities across geographic regions, among differing groups of consumers, and between community and institutional supports;

Whereas outside of families, private providers that employ direct support professionals deliver the majority of supports and services for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities in the community;

Whereas direct support professionals provide a wide range of supportive services to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities on a day-to-day basis, including habilitation, health needs, personal care and hygiene, employment, transportation, recreation, and house-keeping and other home management-related supports and services so that these individuals can live and work in their communities;

Whereas direct support professionals generally assist individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities to lead a self-directed family, community, and social life;

Whereas private providers and the individuals for whom they provide supports and services are in jeopardy as a result of the growing crisis in recruiting and retaining a direct support workforce;

Whereas providers of supports and services to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities typically draw from a labor market that competes with other entry-level jobs that provide less physically and emotionally demanding work, and higher pay and other benefits, and therefore these direct support jobs are not currently competitive in today's labor market;

Whereas annual turnover rates of direct support workers range from 40 to 75 percent;

Whereas high rates of employee vacancies and turnover threaten the ability of providers to achieve their core mission, which is the provision of safe and high-quality supports to individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities;

Whereas direct support staff turnover is emotionally difficult for the individuals being served;

Whereas many parents are becoming increasingly afraid that there will be no one available to take care of their sons and daughters with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities who are living in the community; and

Whereas this workforce shortage is the most significant barrier to implementing the Olmstead decision and undermines the expansion of community integration as called for by President Bush's New Freedom Initiative, placing the community support infrastructure at risk: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*
2 *concurring),*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This resolution may be cited as the "Direct Support
5 Professional Recognition Resolution".

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING SERVICES OF DI-**
7 **RECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS TO INDIVID-**
8 **UALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.**

9 It is the sense of the Congress that the Federal Gov-
10 ernment and the States should make it a priority to ensure

- 1 a stable, quality direct support workforce for individuals
- 2 with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities
- 3 that advances our Nation's commitment to community in-
- 4 tegration for such individuals and to personal security for
- 5 them and their families.

