

REQUEST: At least \$113.1 million General Revenue to support a **MINIMUM WAGE OF \$15/HR OR MORE** for the services that primarily rely on hands-on Direct Support Professionals.

JUSTIFICATION: This increase is necessary to address an extreme workforce shortage due to inability to compete with state government and retail, fast food, and other industries that offer significantly higher starting wages than APD providers. In addition, the state's minimum wage will eventually increase to \$15/hr due to the Constitutional amendment that passed in 2020.

- Providers are currently operating under emergency rules that allow them to temporarily go below required staffing ratios. Otherwise, there would be more group home and day training facility closures.
- Even with relaxed staffing requirements, nearly 20% of licensed group home beds are vacant. According to APD testimony to the Senate HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, this is largely due to a lack of staffing.
- Membership surveys by Arc and FARF reveal workforce vacancy rates in excess of 20% with 75% having to close facilities or reduce capacity. This is making it difficult to find services for the influx of clients being taken off of the waiting list.
- A recent survey of Arc and FARF providers covering 3,974 Direct Support Professionals found an average wage of \$11.88/hr with 43% of the workforce making less than \$11/hr.
- Despite the low wages, the jobs require applicants to pass a rigorous background check and complete intensive training well beyond that required of jobs in fast food, retail and other industries that compete for low wage workers.
- In addition, the jobs are demanding, stressful, and often unpleasant as these workers attend to basic human needs such as mobility, bathing, eating, toileting, and even medication administration.