My name is Alana Schriver and I am the Executive Director of the Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP, [www.neserviceproviders.org](http://www.neserviceproviders.org)), a state-wide membership association of developmental disability (DD) service providers. Our members serve thousands of Nebraskans and employ thousands more.

There are currently over 3000 people with disabilities on the state’s waiting list. This is not because providers are at *physical* capacity, but rather because providers are unable to maintain the necessary staffing levels that ensure safety while also providing high quality care. Providers would love nothing more than to serve more people - it is mutually beneficial to do so. But the pandemic has created a situation in which providers are being forced to turn down not only *new* referrals but send notice to people *currently in* services that they are no longer able to meet their needs.

According to a national survey ([www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org)):

* **77% of DD providers are turning away new referrals**
* **58% of DD providers are discontinuing services**
* **92% of DD providers report that the pandemic continues to complicate their ability to recruit and retain workers**.

The pandemic has created a job market in which providers are forced to compete with industries that have the luxury of adjusting their hours or raising their prices to mitigate staffing challenges. Disability Services *cannot* do the same. Our rates are dependent upon the state and Medicaid. Only the state has the power to make DD providers competitive employers who can attract a sufficient workforce that meet the needs of our communities’ most vulnerable individuals - including my own son.

A lack of staff does not mean community needs can be simply put on hold. So far, we’ve been lucky in that our upper management levels have been willing and able to step in (even presidents of agencies are taking overnight shifts). Other states have not been so lucky. They’ve been forced to drop people off in Emergency Rooms to ensure they are not left alone - a cost that must also be covered by Medicaid, but at a much higher rate. Some states are calling in the national guard to stay in group homes. I know you do not want to see Nebraska resort to such drastic measures, but that is the path we are on.

You have the power to change this trajectory. APRA funding can and should be used towards hiring, retaining, and training desperately needed Direct Support Professionals. Factoring in turnover rates, the true cost of onboarding just one new employee is approximately $6000. Without financial support and intervention, more and more providers will be forced to close their doors.

Please help us help others by allocating ARPA funding towards expanding the Direct Support Workforce in developmental disabilities services. Thank you.