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Good afternoon Chairman Clements and members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony. My name is Cheryl Wicks (C-H-E-R-Y-L W-I-C-K-S) and I am the Vice President of Government Relations for Mosaic. Mosaic is a nonprofit healthcare organization serving nearly 5,000 people across 13 states in more than 700 communities. We help empower people with disabilities, behavioral health needs and autism, primarily serving people in home and community-based services. Mosaic is funded primarily by Medicaid which is approximately 97% of our funding.

As I reflect on my 22 years of supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, I have never experienced the pure exhaustion and difficulty that our organization has now. Pre-pandemic, we were fearful when our turnover was 45% and now, we can't seem to get below 70%. We used to be able to find numerous high quality employees who were committed and reliable. Now, we are having to make difficult decisions of limiting or closing certain programs due to lack of staff available. **This is unacceptable.** The people we support should be able to count on you and providers like Mosaic to provide all the necessary services under the HCBS Waiver.

Through supporting LB 601, you are committing to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Nebraska that the following are important,

- Quality of services over lackluster support
- Engagement within their community
- the Quality of life for your constituents
- and Less stress on government-funded programs due to income stability

Mosaic is passionate about serving the whole person and partnering for quality outcomes. Yet with vacancies averaging ___ across the state, we are being forced to make the following heart wrenching decisions,

- Which programs do we maintain vs which do we minimize or close?
- What activities in the community need to be limited due to lack of staff?
- Having to hire temporary staff, which means more training by our already stretched thin Supervisors, more often, to ensure consistent care for people supported

All these and more keep me up at night. So I shift to solutions. How can we *partner* together to solve this crisis?

- We can expand current programs, such as shared living, that costs the state less money. For example, the cost for group home services is approximately \$209.71/day vs shared living which is approximately \$148.82/day.
- We can utilize the existing \$50 million in DHS funding in a different way. For example, increase reimbursement rates for services provided, which will result in increased wages and money being used more efficiently for the IDD system

We are grateful for the 15% increase last year and we are starting to see some financial progress, yet it's not at the level we were hoping for. As we look to the future of services, we need to challenge ourselves to explore more flexible service delivery options that are cost effective for the state. Through providing more personalized services, it will help alleviate the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce crisis, increase continuity and consistency of care and decrease safety concerns. It will also assist with positively impacting the waitlist for services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). For example,

- Mosaic's data for personal outcomes demonstrates that a shared living model and supported living have the highest outcomes for people such as, understanding their rights, feeling safe, free from abuse and neglect, continuity of care.
 - People with challenging behaviors was 87% lower when organizations provided each person with continuous and consistent services
 - The number of emergency department visits for people was 90% lower when people participated in the life of the community
 - The number of injuries for people was 60% higher when people had direct support staff turnover within 2yrs. Mosaic's current turnover rate is 80%.

Thank you for the opportunity to share alternative solutions that support LB 601, which directly impacts people with IDD in Nebraska.

I am available to answer any questions the Committee might have.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Wicks

Vice President of Government Relations

Mosaic