



## **Sharing Your Story** ***Family Members***

The Lanterman Coalition, made up of the 21 major stakeholders in California’s community-based developmental service system, is uniting around a single critical concern. Years of underfunding, cuts, rate freezes, old funding formulas, and inflation have hurt service providers and regional centers’ ability to ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families get the services and supports they need. To fix this, our system needs a 10% across-the-board funding increase now, and 5% increases yearly, until funding for provider rates and regional center services is reformed. As you meet with Legislators, send letters, and spread the word, figuring out what to say can sometimes be the hardest part. Here are a few tips that might help!

### **The Basic Format**

Sharing your story, whether in a letter, at a hearing, or in a one-on-one meeting, starts the same. Thank the Legislator for their time! Then tell a bit about the issue, and give a few examples from your own life. End your letter, public testimony, or meeting by urging the Legislator(s) to remember you when they are voting on developmental services issues, and thank them again.

### **Talking Points**

What you bring to this conversation is important, and it’s critical that you share your expertise! In these messages, draw from your experiences and share the truth you live every day. When looking at these possible talking points, be sure to use your own words, and your answers touch on our universally-shared theme: *Funding reform will help our system better serve people with developmental disabilities.*

- *Stable staffing matters.*

Your ability to care for your family member comes from a place of deep love, but also having the supports that let you meet their needs at home. This is personal. So when a direct care staffer leaves for a job with better pay, or a regional center employee finds work somewhere else, you often have to start over. High turnover rates mean people have less time to learn about your family member’s needs. How have changes in the employees you interact with impacted you and your loved one?

- *Your family member deserves high-quality staff.*

Direct service professionals interact with your loved one, sometimes at a very personal level that requires a degree of trust and professionalism that would be totally foreign to people whose lives are not touched by developmental disabilities. The best-case scenario is a career-minded professional, who can build a relationship with you and your loved one over many years. But funding levels make that virtually impossible. How has your family been affected by DSPs leaving for jobs with better pay?

- *High caseloads make it harder for service coordinators to better know you and your needs.*

The role of a service coordinator is to learn about the needs of people with developmental disabilities, and work with individuals, their families, and other people to collaboratively create a plan to meet those needs. But excessively high caseloads mean each service coordinator has to do that for more people, leaving less time for each individual. How have high caseloads made it harder for you and your loved one to work effectively with your service coordinator?

- *Stable programs matter.*

All the service elements that make up the tapestry of support for your loved one matter. A day program is more than just a place to go; it's a meaningful part of someone's life. While the technical term is "community care facility," it is a home to the people who live there. But it's also important to know that they are there tomorrow, too. Program closures disrupt daily life. When homes are closed, the move is rarely expected, and never easy. How has your life been affected by programs going out of business?

- *Your family member has needs that can be met, but the services aren't there.*

Years of budget cuts make it harder and harder for service providers and regional centers to maintain and develop services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. California prides itself on not having a waiting list, but there are cases of people whose needs are simply not being met. What are the services and supports your family member (or you) needs to thrive, that just aren't available?

- *You are here today, and want to ensure that your love and support carries on for years to come.*

It's not easy to think about, but there will come a day when the level of direct, personal care and support you provide is harder to manage. What supports do you want to see, that aren't available yet, to ensure your legacy of love surrounds your family member for their lifetime?

Your advocacy matters! Our system is facing a monumental challenge. It's big, it's complicated, and there are a lot of moving parts. But we have to start somewhere, and a 10% budget increase for our system is the first step the Lanterman Coalition is rallying around. To make that – and comprehensive reform – happen, we need you to stand up for people with developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, and regional centers. The system that supports people to live in communities of their choosing needs you. Every voice throws light on a part of this common problem we are facing, and we need you to let your light shine!

*P.S. Please let us know how it went! While this is a grassroots push, any feedback you have will help us all better focus our work. Have any questions? Get a Legislator to send [a letter like Senator Beall's](#)? Learn that they have a family member with a developmental disability? Told directly that this isn't their priority? Sharing the intel will let us ensure that everyone – including you – can make best use of their time and talents! Please go to [www.lantermancoalition.org/contact](http://www.lantermancoalition.org/contact) and drop us a line, or email [info@lantermancoalition.org](mailto:info@lantermancoalition.org)!*

Link: Senator Beall's Letter – [www.lantermancoalition.org/docs/Beall.pdf](http://www.lantermancoalition.org/docs/Beall.pdf)