



Sharing Your Story *Service Provider Employees*

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 vote 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.

- *You work hard, but work harder to make ends meet.*
People who work directly with people with developmental disabilities aren’t in it to make their millions. You care about the people you serve, and this work means more to you than just a paycheck. But while your passion has kept up, your paycheck hasn’t. Rates paid to service providers have stagnated, been cut, or both, for years, and you see that each pay day. Meanwhile, bills still have to be paid, and food put on the table at home. How do your wages affect your commitment to the field of developmental services? Do you need to work two jobs to make ends meet—and does that impact the energy you have to put into services? What employee benefits have been cut since you started working as a service provider?
- *Good people come, but good people go.*
You’ve probably seen more than a few of your coworkers leave for jobs with higher pay. How does it affect the people you serve when staff are constantly changing?
- *Continuity matters.*

Some people have needs that can be met with various staffers, and without much one-on-one attention. But other people are best served by high-quality care what has a high degree of continuity. Disruptions in schedules become disruptions in lives. Have you seen cases where more “continuity of care” should be provided, but the lack of money makes it impossible?

- *The people you serve deserve the best, but can't always get it.*

The services you provide to people mean the world to them. In many ways, it is their world – or at least, a major part of it! Working so closely with individuals, you've come to learn about them, what they need, and the unique issues they face. With more money, how could you better help them?

- *Families are stretched to the limit.*

The supports you provide are only part of the story. You help individuals with developmental disabilities that live with families struggling to hold their lives together and provide many supports to the individual you help. In some cases, if families had been able to receive just a little more support, they could have kept their loved one at home. Instead, they weren't able to, so the family member had to leave the home, at a much high cost. Do you have a story about a family you can share?

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 and drop us a line, or email info@lantermancoalition.org!

Link: Senator Beall's Letter – www.lantermancoalition.org/docs/Beall.pdf