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brought against them in the court. That happened several times in the nineties. The state subsequently was not the winner, and subsequent rate increases are based upon those raises that are received at entry level. So as we increase salaries to entry-level employees in our state budget, the Appropriations Committee, even in the worst of times, the toughest of economic times, has tried to keep faith in bringing that level up to 90 percent. Now equitable and equity in itself is a question mark. That also was addressed by the Legislature. When we started addressing this in the early nineties, we had providers in the state that were being paid on historical costs resulting in different rates to different providers in different areas. The lowest-paid providers received approximately 60 percent of the highest-paid providers. And over a ten-year period, that gap was narrowed and finally was eliminated four years ago. And I want to make certain that we don't confuse what I'm asking for here with what the typical provider reimbursement rates are within the budget and the increases or level funding or decreased that we've seen over the year, because those are the reimbursement rates that are based on the provision of services in total by the providers. What the piece that I'm asking you to maintain faith with what we've done in the past in AM1440 is, let's keep the faith of what we established a number of years ago by making certain that direct care staff with community-based providers are paid at at least 90 percent of the level of state direct care staff. Why? Why should we even be concerned about this? You know, we're putting this year, at least as I see, in our budget and our spending, we're putting \$1 million right now in HHS into hiring additional state employees to monitor quality. The very real impact of not giving the same type or similar type entry-level wages to direct care staff totally impacts on the quality of care that we, unfortunately, receive in community-based services. I think providers work hard and they find other places in their budget to subsidize these dollars so that they can try as best as possible to keep entry-level workers. But if you look at the turnover rates on direct care staff, because they can truly go to Arby's and McDonald's and Amigo's and I don't want to leave anybody out, but all of the fast food restaurants, they can make more money going there and working without the pressures and without the responsibility that they accept as an entry-level