



Inspiring Unlimited Opportunities for People to Create the Life They Choose

February 15, 2017

To: Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services
From: Allen Cress, CEO, Southern Oregon Aspire
Re: Support of SB238

Chair Gelser and Members:

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Senate Bill 238, which would help to resolve the current staffing crisis impacting nearly every agency in the state that provides comprehensive services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Southern Oregon Aspire is the region's largest provider of residential and vocational support services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our mission is to help provide opportunities for disabled individuals to "Create the Life They Choose".

Our organization employs a dedicated and hardworking staff of nearly 200 Direct Support Professionals. These women and men receive extensive, specialized training that prepares them to successfully support disabled adults with individualized care. This could include everything from weekly budgeting to full support of the individual in their daily lives and activities. The work they do is in no way considered "unskilled labor."

The rate at which DSPs are compensated is barely above minimum wage, and it is no secret that DSPs throughout the state are struggling to make ends meet. Many of these skilled professionals qualify for public assistance; it is, in fact, common to see them working second jobs to support their families.

The current pay structure contributes to an employee turnover rate of 41% at Southern Oregon Aspire. We feel fortunate; some providers in Oregon report greater than a 200% annual employee turnover rate. This turnover has detrimental effects on the people that count on us to support them. In our work, consistency of care between an individual and the provider organization helps maintain an important and therapeutic level of stability in the lives of those we serve. We've seen time and time again how damaging a disruption of the DSP relationship can be on a care recipient.

In the interest of improving the quality of life for the dedicated team of DSPs across the state, and more importantly in the lives of the people we serve, we urge you to vote in support of SB238.

Very Truly Yours,

Allen Cress
Southern Oregon Aspire