



February 14, 2017

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Anna Keenan-Mudrick and Bernie Wilson, Co-Chairs, IDD Coalition

RE: Support for SB 238

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Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Coalition (IDD Coalition) is a group of approximately 30 organizations across Oregon that promote quality services, equality and community integration for Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

The IDD Coalition believes that Oregon is strongest when all people have supports to be healthy and safe as part of their community. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are a critical support component in the lives of thousands of Oregonians with IDD. Low wages for these workers weaken communities by lowering the quality of care and jeopardizing the health and safety of people with IDD.

We support SB 238 because it will adequately compensate DSPs for the work they do in supporting Oregonians with IDD to be part of their communities. SB 238 also allows for annual inflation. The DSP wage crisis happened in part because budgets from several past biennia removed cost of living increases. We support that SB 238 learns from this error and includes annual inflation.

We are also happy to see that SB 238 creates a career path for DSPs using a nationally recognized training curriculum that includes a Code of Ethics. Too often, DSPs leave the field because they cannot earn a living wage. By creating a strong wage base, plus a career path that includes ethical obligations, Oregon is taking a solid step toward stabilizing this workforce – and stabilizing the lives of Oregonians with IDD.

With over 1,400 DSP job openings today, the DSP wage crisis impacts communities right now. People being supported have to constantly pause their lives to train new staff. This disrupts their



life at home and in community. Family members worry the quality of care will suffer each time a new DSP is trained to support their loved one. Provider agencies have to focus on keeping quality services as their workforce churns. Finally, DSPs that enjoy this work have to leave the field simply to earn a wage that is sufficient to feed their families. Oregon can do better, and SB 238 is a step in the right direction.

We urge you to support and stabilize the lives of Oregonians with IDD by passing SB 238.