

Good morning Chair Keny-Guyer, vice-chair Sanchez, vice-chair Stark, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services. My name is Kyndall Mason, I am a Policy & Political Strategist for the Service Employees International Union Local 503. I appreciate the opportunity to share SEIU 503's perspective on House Bill 2728, and our support for raising wages for Direct Support Professionals.

It is clear that the low wages offered to DSPs have made it difficult to attract new workers. Likewise, low wages contribute to an estimated 90% turnover among DSPs in the group home sector. The training costs associated with turnover and the high costs resulting from overtime dependence, are clearly expensive. However, this bill does not address many of the underlying issues in the system of supports.

This bill attempts to solve the problem of low wages and high turnover of direct support professionals, by first comparing them to two different sectors of care, and then by just throwing money at an entire industry that has little oversight or transparency. The bill is asking that DSPs not be paid less than two different types of jobs, with two very different wage scales. Both of which have union representation and, ultimately, financial transparency. Group homes are simply

not held to that same level of transparency.

Direct Support Professionals work in group homes, providing supports for people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Personal Support Workers provide care for a similar population of people who are currently living independently, or with their families. PSWs are represented by a union and there is complete financial transparency with the Medicaid dollars that are spent through that particular type of care. Workers at SACU, the Stabilization and Crisis Unit, also make livable wages, and are represented by a union, in a sector of work that has transparency. The work of a DSP is different than both of these types of supports, and there is currently little financial transparency in this system of care.

In addition, there is no hard evidence that simply increasing the rate for Group Home providers, will result in better pay and lower worker turnover in group homes. For example, I'd like to touch on the 4% increase from 2015 that came with HB 5206, which was intended to increase the wages of DSPs.

That bill was intended to increase the DSP average wage of \$10.80. It should be noted that both DHS and the providers believed the wage model was \$11.23 when the 4% increase passed. However, the model was actually based on a DSP

wage of \$12.94. The 4% increase, then, should have led to an average wage of \$13.45.

Our research department reviewed starting wages posted on Craigslist and provider websites for 33 group home providers between September 12 and September 23, 2016, well after the increase went into effect. Of the job postings reviewed, 14 providers advertised a starting wage below the \$10.80 average and all were below the model wage of \$12.94. There is a table included summarizing our research with wages advertised.

While 503 supports increasing wages for DSPs, we believe that a number of reforms are needed to protect the autonomy and rights of individuals receiving supports and services in these settings. These reforms include requiring that case managers explicitly inform individuals that independent living is an option when receiving state funded services; raising penalties for abuse to match the fines levied in other long-term care settings and enhancing protections for mandatory reporters; requiring annual inspections of group home facilities; and requiring providers to staff according to an individual's support plan, rather than minimum staffing ratios defined in statute. We hope that these elements will lead to comprehensive reforms in the group home sector, provide more

opportunities for independent living, and ensure that both the individuals working in this sector and receiving support in this sector are treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you,

Kyndall Mason

**Advertised Starting Wages for DSPs, 9/12/2016-9/23/2016**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Posted Rate</b>	<b>+/- \$10.80</b>	<b>+/- \$12.94</b>
ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS	\$10.45	(\$0.35)	(\$2.49)
ALBERTINA KERR CENTERS	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
ALTERNATIVE SVCS-OREGON, INC	\$11.30	\$0.50	(\$1.64)
ALVORD-TAYLOR, INC	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES	\$10.25	(\$0.55)	(\$2.69)
BRIGHTSIDE	\$10.25	(\$0.55)	(\$2.69)
COAST REHAB SERVICES (coastal & metro)	\$10.60	(\$0.20)	(\$2.34)
COMMUNITY ACCESS SERVICES II, INC	\$11.25	\$0.45	(\$1.69)
COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC	\$11.38	\$0.58	(\$1.56)
DUNGARVIN OREGON, LLC	\$11.04	\$0.24	(\$1.90)
EDWARDS CENTER, INC	\$11.40	\$0.60	(\$1.54)
EN AVANT, INC	\$9.50	(\$1.30)	(\$3.44)
HOOD RIVER SHELTERED WORKSHOP	\$12.40	\$1.60	(\$0.54)
LIVING OPPORTUNITIES, INC	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
MENTOR	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
MID-VALLEY REHABILITATION	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
NATIONAL MENTOR SERVICES, LLC	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
OPPORTUNITY FOUNDATION OF CENTRAL OREGON	\$10.50	(\$0.30)	(\$2.44)
OREGON MENNONITE RES SVCS	\$12.00	\$1.20	(\$0.94)
OREGON SUPPORTED LIVING PROGRAM	\$11.85	\$1.05	(\$1.09)
PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY LIVING, INC	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
PATHWAY ENTERPRISES, INC	\$12.00	\$1.20	(\$0.94)
PEARL BUCK CENTER, INC	\$10.50	(\$0.30)	(\$2.44)
RAINBOW ADULT LIVING	\$10.80		(\$2.14)
RENEW CONSULTING, INC	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
RISE, INC	\$12.00	\$1.20	(\$0.94)
RON WILSON CENTER	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
SHANGRI-LA CORP	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
SOUTHERN OREGON ASPIRE	\$9.80	(\$1.00/\$.50)	(\$3.14)
STAR OF HOPE ACTIVITY CENTER, INC	\$10.25	(\$0.55)	(\$2.69)
UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY OF OR & SW WASH, INC	\$11.53	\$0.73	(\$1.41)
WORK UNLIMITED, INC	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)