

Good morning, my name is Fallon Lewis. I am employed by Community Access Service in Clatskanie Oregon as a house manager. This means I coordinate services for the people we support and supervise the staff who provide this service. The people that I work with experience intellectual and Developmental disabilities (IDD) and are important members of our community.

Direct Support Professionals are key to quality supports in IDD services. The wages DSP receive are not consistent with scope of the work they do. DSPs have to be able to provide a wide variety of supports that are unique to each person's individual goals and needs. This can include helping someone with eating a meal, taking a bath or getting dressed for the day. Sometimes the work is highly specialized as a person may need support with behavior support, complex medical support and help accessing and participating within the community. One of the most important jobs a DSP has is helping someone develop unpaid friendships and maintain relationships. We all know our life is fuller when we are truly connected to others. DSP's help those they work with live full lives much like you and I.

I started my career as a DSP. This was in 2011 and my starting wage was 9.75, now 8 year later DSP 's are starting anywhere from \$12-13 per hours. That is not much progress considering changes to economy and minimum wage. This workforce deserves better. When I was a DSP as single mother of two, the wages did not allow me to provide for myself and children. I did what any single mother would do and I sought other employment so I could make ends meet. I was lucky, thankfully in 2013 Community Access Services was able to offer me a manager position which allowed me to stay in the field that I loved. This is not the case for most DSP's, they are faced with the choice of staying in a job they love or providing for their families. I am hoping today you can help me change this for that DSP's across Oregon and invest increase wages for this important workforce.

Investing in DSP wages is important for so many reasons, but most importantly is the impact they make in the lives of the people they work for each day. Stable DSPs help people learn new skills and discover their own potential. I have had the pleasure of witnessing people be leaders in their lives, be advocates in their health care, overcome trauma and gain the confidence to engage fully in their communities. This work is full of challenges and rewards, and the best gains are made when someone supported can trust the DSP that is working with one day and will be there the next.