

From: [Amie Scott](#)
To: [JWMHS Exhibits](#)
Subject: DSP Wages Crisis and HB 5026
Date: Friday, February 15, 2019 1:38:53 PM

To whom it may concern,

My name is Amie Scott, and I am a single trans-woman, a mom of three incredible teens who have disabilities. I also am the Executive Director of a Medicaid Provider Agency. We currently employ nearly 50 DSP's who provide in-home and community-based services to our customers. All administrative staff, including owners, also provide direct supports in the field. We primarily provide attendant care (one-on-one supports for activities of daily living), and Day Support Activity (DSA), which is a program to encourage socialization and skills development within groups of adults who experience developmental disabilities. We are in the process of credentialing to provide employment services (job development and job coaching) for our clients starting in April 2019. We make a difference.

We also maintain a niche in serving a doubly marginalized population - members of the LGBTQI community who experience developmental disabilities. Our client base identifies as 10% LGBTQI, twice the statewide average of 5% of adult individuals who identify as LGBTQI within Oregon. In addition, we actively recruit immigrants and refugees, and our core value of inclusive diversity facilitates our mission to both employ and serve these marginalized populations.

Oregon is one of only 3 states that have no state or privately operated institutional level services specifically for individuals who experience developmental disabilities. In Oregon, 75% receive support services in their home or family's home. We provide those services to almost 200 individuals and want to continue to serve more.

We are able to change lives by teaching people the skills they need to help them live on their own and have the highest quality of life. We have a DSA program which helps to create peer to peer friendships as well as build a network of natural supports.

We are very understaffed not just in our office but across the State of Oregon. With the minimum wage rising and the fact that we have not seen any increase to adjust to these costs since 2007, we cannot continue to be viable without some sort of funding to help us match the cost for DSP wages. We have lost DSP's and staff because they often leave for jobs that offer more money and less stress. We need more good DSP's and higher salaries to provide more incentive to work in public service. We as an agency run extremely efficient and pay for ALL of our admin, workers comp, healthcare, PTO, benefits, audits, payroll taxes, insurances from a 1.2% margin.

If we are forced to close our doors almost 50 DSP's will lost their jobs, and 200 customers will be put on a waiting list for services. There is already a HUGE shortage and staffing crisis for DSP's in Oregon and nationwide. We are seeking help to simply remain viable and offer services to the most marginalized of the marginalized.

We are not looking to get rich, we are simply looking to continue offering services and remain viable.

We are facing a monumental crisis that threatens to close our agency within the next 18-24 months. At current funding levels we are unable to provide a livable and competitive wage to our staff, who are all Direct Support Professionals.

With 27,808 individuals in need of home care based services in Oregon, we must address this crisis in staffing. The turnover rate in Oregon and within our own agency is 52%. There are not enough DSP's to support these 27,808 individuals. We must elevate the industry and apply a livable wage to this field.

ODDS developed rate models for the services we provide back in 2007. Since then, new rate models have been developed by Burns and Associates using provider survey data (which we provided on behalf of our agency) in conjunction with Bureau of Labor Statistics and Consumer Price Index

information. Lilia Teninty, Director of ODDS requested the I/DD Workforce Expansion and Development Policy Option Package, which was not incorporated into the Governor's Budget.

Rate models suggest that true costs necessitate an hourly agency rate for attendant care of \$40.69 (see Burns and Associates Rate Model Sheet). We currently receive the agency rate for attendant care of \$27.28 per hour, set back in 2007. We are currently being funded at only 67% of our needed rate.

Direct Support Professionals are critical to sustaining services for individuals who experience developmental disabilities. As an agency, we have helped clients attain housing, manage their health and avoid costly trips to the emergency room, and have assisted clients to maintain their compliance with taking psychotropic medications and applied positive behavioral supports to avoid violent incidents to the public. There would be a very real public and financial cost to losing dozens of small private agencies who are seeking to serve this population.

There is already a dangerous shortage of DSP's to provide services. Our own agency has a waiting list of clients needing help. Yet we will be unable to continue if no funding increase is provided. We personally know of at least one agency that was forced to shut down their operations a year ago after it tried to provide their workforce a competitive wage comparable to what the SEIU secured for state workers. This effort proved unsustainable and this agency has closed their doors.

The small agency, in-home and community-based model of service delivery is far more efficient and cost effective than prior institutional models and residential models, however this DSP wage discrepancy has hit an absolute crisis point and must be addressed for the sustainability of services across the state to be maintained. With a nationwide shortage of home care workers to provide services to individuals experiencing developmental disabilities, it is crucial that funding be increased in order to stabilize this necessary workforce.

We are requesting an amendment to HB 5026 that specifically includes the POP I/DD 126, Workforce Expansion and Development, to ensure that these efficient, cost effective and vital home and community-based services continue.

Thank you for your time, and for your commitment to this issue.

Sincerely and Desperately,

~Amie Scott~

Executive Director

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