

From: [Shannon McCurry](#)
To: [JWMHS Exhibits](#)
Cc: sen.leebeuyer@state.or.us; [Rep Nosse](#)
Subject: DSP Wages Crisis and HB 5026
Date: Friday, February 15, 2019 11:24:05 AM

RE: [HB 5026](#), the DHS budget bill, and the Policy Option Proposal I/DD 126
WORKFORCE EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

My name is Shannon McCurry. Amie Scott and I are the co-founders of Amie's Community Care, a Medicaid Certified Provider Agency that serves almost 200 individuals who experience developmental disabilities. We serve adults and children in the Greater Portland Metro area and beyond.

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.

We currently employ nearly 50 DSP's to 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 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.

Rural areas are suffering. We have an agency division established in Yamhill County, and are in the process of expanding into Polk County, which currently has very limited in-home services available. We have been informed by Polk County that there is only one other agency providing in home support services in the area. If we cannot sustain and continue our expansion into rural Oregon, these individuals experiencing developmental disabilities will continue to be grossly underserved.

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.

To compound the problem, the minimum wage continues to rise in increments. The SEIU, the union representing the state employed workers (Personal Support Workers or PSW's) who also provide attendant care services, negotiated a rate increase and were funded in April 2018 at a base rate of \$14.65 per hour, up to \$17.65 per hour for PSW hourly wages. Currently, we bring our entry level staff in at \$14.00 per hour. We cannot compete with the negotiated wage procured through the SEIU for state workers, nor can we sustain through the future increases in minimum wage requirements. Since the new rates were implemented for state workers in April 2018, as an individual agency we have lost 4 staff members due to our inability to match what the state offers in wage ranges. There are not enough state workers to meet the needs of the population we serve. Both state and private agencies are needed to address the shortage.

As an agency, our net profit margin is only 1.2% despite running extremely lean and with efficiency. Our total revenue in 2018 was almost \$1.4 million.

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,

--

~Shannon (Cook) McCurry~

Director of Operations

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