

From: [Ishah F](#)
To: [JWMHS Exhibits](#)
Subject: House Bill 5026 POP 126
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 6:56:05 PM

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about why it is so vitally important to support the passage of House Bill 5026, with the added amendment of POP 126 in I/DD Workforce Development and Expansion. We support the Governor's recommendation of the 5% annual COLAs for home and community-based care providers.

Oregon has been a leading pioneer in the long-term care for people with disabilities. With nearly 15% of Oregonians experiencing a disability, it is important that Oregon continue being a proactive leader in the ongoing battle to ensure that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not forgotten.

The community based care option is more cost effective than the medical setting of a nursing facility or the comprehensive settings of group and foster homes. The community based care option also honors the philosophy of Oregon's long-term care system – independence, choice, and dignity for those served. Oregon must continue investing in long-term community based care and its Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce in order to maintain services to the tens of thousands of Oregonians with I/DD. If Oregon wants to remain ahead of the curve and retain a rapidly dwindling workforce of DSPs, we must continue making investments in these crucial services and ensure DSP success and livelihood.

DSP's are much more than caregivers, they provide support in all aspects of an individual's life. A few examples are assistance with navigating the healthcare system, accessing counselors, identifying behavioral services, finding and maintaining housing, gaining skills around mobility, local transit usage, assistive technology and gaining and maintaining integrated employment. We also know that DSPs offer support with learning how to self-advocate and support around healthy living and lifestyle. DSPs ultimately offer support in learning how to provide and take care of themselves, whether in their own home or out in the community. DSP's constantly go above and beyond to ensure that the people they are supporting are continuing to strive for their independence, empowerment and full inclusion by leading self-directed lives and contributing to the community.

As you consider your priorities moving forward, *please* ensure that Oregon remains a national leader in long-term care and that we do so by honoring the independence, choice, and dignity of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ishah Fehon Echols

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