

Dear Legislators,

One day, out of curiosity, we counted. To our amazement, a wonderful person I support, with severe disabilities, had over 40 different Direct Support Professionals assist him in intimate ways over a short six month period. Imagine... That is a busload of strangers rotating through, helping him, including in the bathroom. Would you stand for this if it was somebody you loved?

Unfortunately, this is not so unusual and a clear demonstration of how our low paid, unstable workforce directly affects people. Consider this person's ongoing experience when you are making your decision.

The Oregon Resource Association (ORA) represents community non-profits and other organizations that provide services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in partnership with the Oregon Department of Human Services. ORA has established HB2964 with the sponsorship of Rep. Nosse, with a goal to Value the Work, and Raise the Wage for this critical workforce.

HB2964 moves the average wage for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to 150% of minimum wage (based on Portland-Metro minimum). This not only means a significant increase in DSP and other wages, but it creates promise for the future by ensuring that wages for these essential workers keep pace each time minimum wage goes up.

As essential frontline workers, DSPs have been a lifesaving resource for people with IDD during the pandemic. When wildfires raged through Oregon last summer, DSPs took quick action to get people to safety - even when they didn't know if their own families or homes were safe.

Yet these workers are only paid an average wage of \$13.94, with the average starting wage at \$13.12. This results in chronic staffing shortages and high turnover rates. Many of these workers must rely on other state funds like housing subsidies and snap benefits to survive. Funding HB2964 will create a sustainable solution to this harsh reality.

We are asking for your support of HB2964. Your support will bring lasting change to this crucial workforce and to some of Oregon's most vulnerable. Together let's Value the Work and Raise the Wage!

Thank you,

Candy Zalenski