

Dear Chair Anna Williams and Committee,

I am writing today to express our support for HB2964 to set Direct Support Professional (DSP) wages at 150% of minimum wage. At The Arc Oregon we support people with intellectual / developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families across Oregon. For over 65 years The Arc of Oregon has provided advocacy, support, and services to people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. We also support and represent nine local chapters of The Arc serving Oregonians with I/DD across the state. We envision a world in which all persons have the support and opportunities they need for personal development and independence, interdependence with family and friends, and inclusion in the community.

We also serve as guardian for over 60 adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) throughout Oregon. Our connection and involvement with Oregonians experiencing I/DD provides us with substantial exposure to the significant impact DSPs have on the lives of the people they support.

I would like to you take a moment to think about the responsibility that rests on a DSP. DSP's are responsible for the lives of those they support. Duties include administering medications, providing meals including hand feeding or tube feeding, supporting with all activities of daily living including showering, dressing, and toileting, monitoring for pressure sores, housekeeping duties, supporting behavior including those with aggressive or violent behavior, making a house a home, and general well-being of each person within the home where they work. They are responsible for or have a major role in the medical, recreational, educational, residential, and vocational aspects of the lives of the people they support. In addition, they are to provide these supports in a manner that is based on the persons' likes, dislikes, preferences, strengths, areas of interest, cultural background, and communication style. DSPs are the ones who know the intricacies of providing hands-on support to each person as an individual. The DSP knows how to best support someone in the shower, what foods are their favorite, which holiday is most enjoyed, how the person communicates their needs, and who the person likes. These, and many other pieces of knowledge, add up to create person-centered supports for each person and it takes time and dedication for a DSP to gain this knowledge. Having long-term, dedicated DSPs has a direct positive impact on the well being of the people they support. By providing a living wage and valuing the support DSPs provide, the people they support will live richer, fuller lives.

*Achieve with us.*

At The Arc Oregon, one particular person we support through guardianship has had a long time DSP who has been an amazing support. This DSP has been an advocate for her as she has aged, and her support needs have changed. When the person started to develop dementia, it was this DSP who first noticed the small changes that raised concern. It was also this DSP that the person continued to trust and would allow to provide care. When the person's support needs got to the point that she needed to move into a more supportive environment, this DSP transferred to the new location to aid in the transition. It was fortunate that the new location was with the same provider agency, which allowed the DSP to easily transition with the person. Due to this DSP the transition to a new home was accomplished with less distress than was anticipated. The person had a trusted caregiver present in the new environment and the DSP was able to educate the new staff about the person's wishes, preferences, strengths, and communication style. This is what can happen when someone has a long-term DSP who knows them and supports them. There are many DSPs out there who are amazing at what they do and committed to caring for the people they support despite the lack of livable wage they are being paid. Unfortunately, high turnover and low wages make it difficult to retain DSPs and this negatively impacts the people who need support.

We are asking you to support HB2964 to show that Oregon values the tremendous contributions of DSP's who are supporting vulnerable Oregonians.

Thank you for your time,



Emily A Braman  
Guardianship, Advocacy, and Planning Services Program Director  
The Arc Oregon