

This is my written testimony: Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Emily Fern Dayton, and I live in Silverton, Oregon. I am here to urge you to prioritize funding for Developmental Disability Services, and more specifically in DSP Wages, DD Case Management and Regional Family Networks.

My child is 5 and a half years old and has a rare syndrome, which involves multiple medically complex conditions, mobility impairments and intellectual disabilities. Since she was born, we have been fighting to keep her alive. In her short life, she has had more near death experiences, and frantic ambulance rides than I can recall. She still suffers from seizures and an upper airway restriction that causes her to gag and awake frequently in the night.

Many times in the middle of the night, I have ran frantically to her room oxygen and suction in hand to brace for the worst, is she still breathing? No parent should have to live in constant fear of losing their child, the trauma and pain is indescribable. She is the most incredible, creative and loving child who deserves constant love, support and community acceptance.

Unfortunately, due to extremely low wages and limited training for DSP workers, we have been forced to do everything on our own. In a year and a half, we had 8-10 DSP's come and go. Each decided to move on, many stated the \$12 per hour pay wasn't sufficient.

We have been extremely isolated and lost our careers in order to fully provide for our child. It has been an extremely challenging and ostracizing life for nearly 6 years straight. Due to societal ableism, our child is excluded from play dates, and our family and friends do not understand or provide support.

It is time to pay support workers a living wage of \$20 per hour and provide accurate training and knowledge. It should not be the parents sole responsibility to provide 24/7 care for their child who is medically fragile.

Family Networks, Direct Support Professionals and DD Case Managers have provided essential lifelines to Oregonians with disabilities and their families during these very uncertain times. Please fund these vital programs to ensure these vulnerable people have the supports they need, when they need them. Please increase DSP pay to \$20 per hour and establish training to create a real career field.

Kind Regards,

Emily Fern Dayton, MS
emilyferndayton@gmail.com