

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee.

My name is John Barlow and I am a Direct Support Professional at Benco. I am here to urge you to prioritize full funding for Developmental Disability Services, and more specifically in DSP Wages.

In the 7 years that I have worked for BENCO I have seen 7 good DSP's leave this job to find one that pays better. 3 of those DSP's went back to school, 3 took state jobs that paid several dollars more and 1 chose a different career path entirely due to the stress of this job.

Entry level positions start wages a little higher than minimum wage and DSP'S often leave after a year or so due to higher wages being paid at jobs they can find elsewhere, doing tasks that are much easier with less responsibility.

This is problematic for many reasons; two I will highlight today, the people we support and the DSP's left to fill the gaps. For the people we provide care for it is traumatic and painfully emotional, as Direct Support Professionals are most often the only stable and consistent relationships they have in their lives. Starting over with someone new is uncomfortable and requires significant time to build trust. In some instances, I've seen people I support hurt themselves, hurt other people, & destroy property, all out of grief and out of anger. We can prevent this from happening with consistency and trust.

For the DSP's who choose to stay, it means working overtime and filling in until someone new can be found and properly trained. This often means working 50-60 hour weeks over extended amounts of time and leads to mental exhaustion and high burnout. When Direct Support Professionals are overworked they can't provide the best care for those they support and often turn to needing additional resources themselves.

Supporting a structure that ensures a higher rate of pay for these critical workers would slow the high turnover rate and would open the door for a larger pool of potential employees so that companies may hire the best people for this highly skilled and important job.

Please fund disability services to ensure these vulnerable people have the supports they need, when they need them.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

John Barlow