

Senators Johnson, Steiner Hayward, Representative Rayfield and distinguished members of the Joint Ways and Means committee...

My name is Jessica Leitner and I am resident of Beaverton, semi-retired after more than 30 years working in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In March of 2020 I began assisting agencies in the I-5 corridor with recruitment of Direct Support Professionals (the caregivers who work in 24 hour group homes across Oregon). Staffing levels were down and hiring was made more difficult by the pandemic.

In the past year I have screened nearly 1200 candidates for open positions in this industry and out of the 1200 only 272 completed applications and moved on to interview for positions. That's a return rate of only 24%.

When I reach out to candidates and ask why they do not want to move forward the number 1 reason stated is WAGE. Even in the metro area where wages are more competitive, candidates do not want to change a catheter bag, tube feed, bathe, lift & transfer, support, transport and otherwise care for those with disabilities when they can make the same amount of money per hour or MORE twirling a sign on a street corner announcing another mattress sale.

This is unacceptable. We need to properly compensate these individuals for the professionals that they are. So I respectfully urge you to consider policy option packages 119, 120 or better yet fund the full rate model for the I/DD industry this session.

Sincerely,  
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