

April 16, 2021

Thank you for your support of Oregonians who experience disabilities, and for providing us the forum to provide input to the challenging task of distributing funds.

My name is Rebecca Simpson and I am the CEO for Pathway Enterprises. Pathway employs over 160 staff who provide a variety of services for people with disabilities in Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, and Deschutes counties. Services include employment, residential, and education for adults with disabilities, and behavioral support for families with children who are struggling with behavioral concerns.

Our DSP workforce is dedicated to those we support, and to the greater disability community. Many of our staff also support their own children who have disabilities.

These staff weathered the Almeda and Obenchain fires as well as COVID outbreaks throughout 2020 and into 2021. DSP's and their managers were critically essential in the following ways:

1. Staff evacuated 3 Community homes. This included 15 residents, their medications, and food, water and comfort items. I witnessed staff at the evacuation site providing much needed emotional support, giving people insulin shots, blending food, brushing teeth, assisting people in the restrooms, and much more.
2. During COVID these same staff were asked to create healthy and happy homes for people who were now unable to access their community. They did hallway bowling, Zoom parties, cooking shows, and so much more throughout the year.
3. When 3 Community homes experienced COVID outbreaks, staff volunteered to work for their coworkers who were quarantined at home due to COVID. These staff left their families during Christmas to support residents who were sick, at the hospital, or recovering at home. In addition, staff who did not test positive immediately, but worked in a positive home, continued to work until they themselves tested positive and were told to quarantine.

Current DSP Funding is not adequate to recruit or maintain a workforce that is asked to provide the level of care needed to ensure the health, safety, happiness, and wellbeing of many of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens.

There are different avenues to pay DSP's their worth, including the following:

POP 119 (average DSP wage 14.82)

POP 120 (average DSP wage 15.31)

Fully Funded Rate Model (average DSP wage 17.81)

HB 2964 (average DSP wage 21.00)

As a representative of the IDD Community, I highly recommend HB 2964 which ensures providers like Pathway will be able to provide stable staff who look to this field as not just their 'heart work' but their career. With fully funded rates providers would be able to ensure the people who rely on our services have consistent staff, consistent care, and consistent lives.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rebecca Simpson, CEO
Pathway Enterprises, Inc.