

I have four combined years of experience in the social services field, including two years as a Direct Support Professional. It is widely understood that the nature of this field is to be overworked and underpaid. It is also widely understood that the turnover and burnout rates in this field are exceptionally high. But it doesn't have to be this way. Despite the fact that being a Direct Support Professional is NOT entry level work, it is chronically compensated as such. DSPs manage medical needs, challenging behavioral health supports, and intimate personal care on a daily basis, but often make a wage barely pushing above minimum wage. Low wages for such a demanding position creates that high turnover, which creates long days and long weeks for the staff who remain who must regularly cover extra shifts. This domino effect create staff that are exhausted, burned out, and still struggling to pay their bills. This is not an environment that is conducive to providing excellent care to the people we support. Increasing DSP wages to a livable rate would improve employee retention, which would allow staff to properly rest between shifts, which would allow staff to give their best while on the job. At the end of the day, we want DSPs to be excited about their job because that significantly impacts the lives of the people we support. In addition, DSPs, being essential workers, have been on the frontline during the entire COVID-19 crisis, and deserve an investment in their wages for the time they've put in over the last year working with a high-risk population. I am asking you to show that you value excellent services for I/DD people in your community by providing a strong I/DD budget with a focus on DSP wages. Thank you.