



February 11, 2021

Oregon HB 2964

To Whom It May Concern:

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are the front line workers of the I/DD support system. DSPs have historically been underpaid for the vital work they do, with minimum wage going up each year, their wages remain basically minimum wage through many years of service. The I/DD system is dependent on DSPs that are not making enough to support their families, so they are forced to choose between the work they love and looking for a better paying job. This constant turnover leads to less effective supports, constant change, and extra training costs, for the people supported. When a DSP leaves, the people they support have their lives interrupted as new DSPs are trained and relationships begin again.

SPARC member Kelly shared “My DSP’s help me with my daily routine. They help me be as independent as possible. They also help me at my doctors appointments when I have them. I also get some extra help with my medication routine. My DSP’s are important to me because they help me through my daily life so I can be as independent as possible. Sometimes it can take a while for me to build trust with new DSP’s, but once we start to get to know each other, then we have a lot of fun throughout the day. When there is a shortage of DSP’s, it can be hard especially for me. I need help with my medication routine as well as my daily routine. I don’t even get to hear back from them as often as I like when they do leave.”

The Self Protections, Advocacy and Rights Council (SPARC) is a self-advocacy group established in 2001. It is comprised of, and governed by, self-advocates who make all the decisions that govern the activities, finances, time and education of its members. SPARC meets once a month to discuss local- and national-level issues that affect people with disabilities and advise policymakers. SPARC believes it is imperative to increase wages to ensure the safety and stability of the workforce providing vital services to people living with I/DD in Oregon.



SPARC is a self advocacy group facilitated by Partnerships in Community Living, Inc. (PCL). PCL is an Oregon not-for-profit organization dedicated to expanding the horizons and enhancing the quality of lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. P.O. Box 129 - Monmouth, OR 97361 (503) 838-2403



Carolyn (DSP) and Linda out and about in Salem, OR

Value the Work. Raise the Wage.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) provide crucial supports to adults and children experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their work includes managing medical needs, challenging behaviors, personal hygiene, and support to maintain employment and make real connections in the community. These incredibly dedicated individuals are not state employees, though funded almost entirely by state and federally matched funds. Accordingly, the small and medium non-profits and entities that staff these community-based homes across Oregon need stronger support from the Legislature so they can continue to provide support to Oregonians with I/DD.

Oregon DSPs only earn an average of 107% of Oregon's metro minimum wage.

HB 2964 will not only provide a raise for this hardworking, essential workforce but will tie the wage rate to the metro minimum wage- ensuring this essential workforce will on average earn 150% of the metro minimum wage AND increase annually with the minimum wage increases.

1 <https://phinational.org/resource/direct-care-workers-in-the-united-states-key-facts/>
2 National Core Indicators Staff Stability Survey: <https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/coreindicators/2018StaffStabilitySurveyReport.pdf>

Oregon can do better...

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) have been on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis, as essential as ever, and they deserve a significant investment in their wages in 2021

According to national data recently released by PHIL^{1}, a national research and workforce Interventions organization, direct support workers are a growing & diverse workforce. Among their findings:

- **Diverse and marginalized.** Most direct support workers are women (87%), and many are people of color (59%) and/or immigrants (27%).
- **Persistently low wages.** Inflation adjusted median hourly wages increased only marginally for the direct support workforce over the last decade - from \$12.61 in 2009 to \$12.80 in 2019.
- **Low-income earnings.** Nationally, residential care aides have some of the lowest median annual earnings at \$21,200 a year. In Oregon, the average hourly DSP wage is \$14.16 and the average starting wage is \$13.06. This continues to lead to high turnover, with 22% staying on the job for less than six months and 59% lasting less than a year.^{2}

Oregon can do better...

Value the Work. Raise the Wage.

What would HB 2964 do to DSP wages?

Today Average DSP Wage:	\$14.16
July 1, 2021	150% = \$21/hr
July 1, 2022	150% = \$22.13/hr

Value the Work.
Raise the Wage.
YES on HB 2964



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