



**HB 2964 – AOCMHP support for Direct Support
Professional reimbursement.**

February 11, 2021

Dear Chair Williams and Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), we are writing in support of improving wages of direct support professionals (DSP), which strengthens support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

AOCMHP's membership includes the Community Developmental Disabilities Programs (CDDPs), which provide services to individuals and families with I/DD in all 36 counties of Oregon. Some of the CDDPs are operated through Community Mental Health Programs, while others are nonprofit entities that contract with local governments or directly with DHS/ODDS. CDDPs help assure the protection and safety of over 31,000 Oregonians with I/DD in collaboration with families and providers; the programs also provide case management services to over 22,000 children and adults.

The DSP workforce is dramatically underfunded. Improving wages will strengthen this workforce that provides 24-hour support to individuals with I/DD. The work of DSP's is difficult and typically includes supporting someone who is a danger to themselves or others, is unable to communicate, or needs total assistance to meet their daily needs. Individuals with I/DD and DSP's alike deserve a stable workforce of skilled professionals, and the current DSP rate structure precludes such stability.

Stabilizing this important workforce will also enable case managers to direct their resources to more critical needs, including supporting individual choice and self-directed decisions. For case managers to effectively do their job, however, they too must be appropriately funded. The case management budget has been significantly underfunded, and without adequate investment, caseloads will continue to increase and the quality of assistance will inevitably suffer. Funding for both DSP's and case managers is critical to protect individuals with I/DD.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 2964.

Sincerely,

Cheryl L. Ramirez
Director, AOCMHP

Dawn Alisa Sadler
DD Specialist, AOCMHP