

Submitter: Katharyn Bennett

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you about HB 2457 and the importance of valuing the work of DSPs across Oregon and raising their wage to an average of 150% of minimum wage. DSPs are much more than caregivers. They provide support in all aspects of a person's life. They are not just there for the fun times or when they celebrate someone achieving a significant goal; they guide people through a complicated healthcare system, help people learn to manage themselves through anger and frustration, they are grief counselors when someone loses a family member or loved one, and so much more. They provide complicated, intimate personal care, and sadly, they may guide someone through their end of life. I started my career as a DSP. I know the joys and the struggles of this job. This is not minimum wage work. I gave my first testimony regarding the need for valuing the work and raising DSP wages in 1988 and 33 years later, I am still here continuing to ask for a long-term solution. Each year that goes by without addressing wage issues for the DSP workforce, the crisis gets worse and our provider system comes closer to collapsing. I have never seen it closer to the point of collapse as it is now.