

February 6, 2023

**RE: HB 2457**

Dear legislators,

I am writing you concerning the wages of Oregon Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). These individuals are tasked with the care and support of our state's most vulnerable people, helping them live the quality and self-determined lives they may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. It is imperative that our elected officials provide a way to offer livable wages to the compassionate people, whom many seek as a career, to support our I/DD population. By supporting **HB 2457**, DSPs will be ensured wages reach 150% of minimum wage and cover the Paid Leave Oregon Payroll Expense.

My son is a recipient of DSP services. It is critical and complicated work! He has Down syndrome and autism with severe developmental disabilities. He also has been diagnosed with general anxiety disorder. His support plans are extensive reflected by the highest SIS tier rate. Nonetheless, he is happy and able to live a full-filled life in a 24/7 residential group home supported by Rise Services Inc.

DSP wages rose significantly after the legislator agreed to fund the current rate model last session. **THANK YOU!** Unfortunately, it's not enough. Current reimbursements for these services were built on cost studies that are now years old, so even though the service rate models are fully funded, the costs built into these models are significantly behind the current market. Many fast food employees earn higher wages than DSPs. This is a HUGE obstacle to maintaining an adequate DSP workforce and ensuring quality services for people with developmental disabilities. Without stable staffing and quality wages, the workforce will remain in a constant state of flux. Did you know in 2013, approximately 6,000 DSPs in our state received over \$20M in public aid due to low wages? That statistic is staggering! After the pandemic, I am sure that statistic is even higher.

Work this important requires unique skills, both innate and trained, to ensure that our I/DD population receives the best care possible. **HB 2457** will certainly impact longevity, impart value and worth to the DSPs effort and dedication, and ultimately provide greater stability in my son's life and those like him.

I implore you to please remember the crucial work DSPs provide when you make financial decisions this legislative session. Please vote **YES** on **HB 2457**.

May God bless you.

Sincerely,

Conni Neustel Kunke on behalf of Blake Neustel and all the DSPs who invest in his life

(c) 503-910-5005  
(e) CLNKunke@gmail.com  
583 SW Allgood St, Dallas, OR 97338