



Hello, I am Jay Brown, currently the Adult and Community Services Director here at Pearl Buck Center. We provide needed support and services to individuals who experience a developmental disability. Our current staff is approx 85 and individuals served is nearly 200 within the Adult Community Services department.

I am writing in support of HB 2457. It ensures that DSPs get the wages they deserve, by moving DSP wages to 150% of minimum wage and covering the Paid Leave Oregon Payroll Expense. This line of work takes a special, dedicated, empathic and loving person to work. However due to wages, we see amazing staff having to leave the field due to wages. Although they deeply care for their individuals, unfortunately they are unable to survive on the wages. They are forced to make a choice in providing for their own families' basic needs, or providing for an individual in services. Which inevitably leads to resignation. I have worked in the social work field for well over 13 years, in those years I have seen DSP's be forced out of this field not by choice but out of survival. Our individuals are forced to lose someone they have grown to trust and feel safe with. This can be a traumatizing event and a cycle that can be broken with your support in HB 2457.

The pandemic and ever changing workforce has continued to be a barrier in our progress on wages. Even though Pearl Buck and other organizations consistently pay wages above the amount that is funded, Pearl Buck Center still struggles to hire and retain employees. This complicated, critical work is often paid less than entry level fast food employees. Current reimbursements for these services were built on cost studies that are now years old and outdated, as the supports have grown, our field has grown. So even though service rate models are fully funded, the costs built into these models are significantly behind the current market. Which is a barrier. We are unable to continue on this path, of losing incredible humans in a much needed field.

Our individuals matter, they can not constantly lose people close to them that understand their support, their lives and feel safe with them! DSP's matter, they are valued, they are incredible and amazing humans that should be paid at a livable wage. Please vote yes on HB 2457. We are all counting on you to be the difference in the lives of many families across Oregon.

Thank you for your time and your future advocacy!

