

Please support HB 2457!

Direct Support Professionals deserve a living wage!

My letter is in support of HB 2457! Raising DSP compensation to 150% of the federal minimum wage and paying the payroll costs associated with Oregon's Paid Leave program ensures that Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) receive the pay they deserve.

Currently, I work as a Fiscal Director at Community Access Services (CAS). We at CAS are a team of more than three hundred Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), Supervisors, and Administrators supporting over one hundred fifty adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities,. I started as a DSP more than 34 years ago, and I've assisted people with intellectual and developmental disabilities my entire life.

When you funded the current rate model during the prior session, DSP compensation rose significantly. Without the increases, we would not have survived the pandemic. I sincerely appreciate your financial assistance, but we must safeguard and improve this investment! Unfortunately, the pandemic and shifting labor market have undermined our success in raising salaries. We still have trouble finding and keeping staff, although providers consistently pay higher wages than what is funded. A car wash down my street is advertising for \$22 per hour! Most of the time, this challenging, meaningful work pays less than jobs at fast-food restaurants. Even if service rate models are fully financed, the costs incorporated into them are substantially behind the current market because existing reimbursements for these services were developed based on cost studies that are now years old. These crucial facts are outlined in the flyer attached at the end of my letter, demonstrating how DSP earnings routinely trend higher than the reimbursement rate.

Here are compelling arguments for why Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) working with individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) deserve to be paid at least 150% of the current minimum wage.

1. DSPs play a crucial role in assisting people with IDD to lead happy and meaningful lives. DSPs assist with personal care and grooming, administering medications, meal preparation, housekeeping, companionship, paying bills, monitoring health conditions, and responding to emergencies. They accompany individuals with IDD to grocery stores and doctor appointments, access public transportation, and assist in participating in community activities. DSPs are needed during hospital stays, helping with personal care, providing emotional support, and communicating with the individual's doctor and medical staff. DSPs must be highly skilled to support people with IDD. They must also comply with Federal and State regulations and laws related to the care of individuals with IDD.
2. DSPs have tremendous high responsibility. They often work one-on-one with individuals with IDD and are responsible for their health and well-being every moment. A DSP must deeply understand the unique needs of each individual's strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and habits. This requires a high level of attention, skill, patience, and emotional intelligence. To prevent burnout and offer excellent assistance to those they serve, DSPs must maintain a healthy work-life balance. DSPs must strike a balance between their personal and professional

obligations. Many DSPs are busy with their families, young children, aging parents, and close friends. While most people worked remotely during the pandemic, Direct Support Professionals had to support people with IDD face-to-face at their homes and in the community!

3. Despite a DSP's work being essential and demanding, they are often paid low wages, making it difficult to make ends meet and may discourage people from pursuing a career in this field. Higher wages would give DSPs more disposable income towards health insurance premiums, copays, and other out-of-pocket medical expenses. This would ensure that they have access to quality health care when needed, which is essential for maintaining their health and well-being. A higher wage will afford DSPs to invest toward their retirement savings for their future and plan for their older years with confidence. The ability to create savings would provide a financial cushion in case of unexpected expenses or emergencies. It is important to note that higher wages would also positively impact the economy as a whole. When workers earn more money, they can purchase more goods and services, which can help to stimulate economic growth and create new jobs.
4. There is currently a DSP shortage. The turnover rate and lack of DSPs are problematic for all providers. Despite the critical and demanding nature of the work, they are often paid wages lower than other jobs with much less responsibility. This has also led many people to discourage pursuing a career in this field. The high turnover rate has caused tremendous disruptions for individuals with IDD who rely on consistent support from familiar care providers. This makes it difficult for individuals with IDD to access the support they need to live fulfilling lives. The DSP shortage will become worse if funding is not increased.

Direct Support Professionals are vital in supporting individuals with IDD. It is crucial DSPs receive fair compensation for their critical and demanding work. A wage increase to 150 percent of the current minimum wage would help to ensure that DSPs can meet their basic needs while providing high-quality support to those they serve. Paying DSPs a higher salary would improve their financial stability and ability to afford work benefits. This would help to ensure that DSPs can maintain their own health and well-being while providing quality support to those they serve. Balancing their responsibilities as a DSP with their personal life has been challenging, and it is important for DSPs to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Please vote yes on HB 2457. DSPs, the people they support and their families are counting on your support!

Thanks!



Ed Little, Fiscal Director
Community Access Services
Beaverton, Oregon



HB 2457

Value the Work. Raise the Wage.

We must continue to move the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce out of crisis.

The 2021 Legislature made a historic investment in services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and for the first time the I/DD system was FULLY FUNDED. Even though this investment allowed us to increase wages for DSPs by \$1.25 an hour (current average reimbursement wage for DSPs at \$17.81), providers still report an average DSP vacancy rate of 23%.

Additional increases in wages are needed to address the current workforce shortage. Per a recent ORA survey, 85% of providers are no longer accepting referrals to serve new people and 86% have reduced capacity or closed services and anticipate closing additional services.



ABOUT DSPs: 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, rather they work for small and medium non-profits and entities that provide community based services across Oregon. While not state employees, their wages (via I/DD rates) are funded almost entirely by state and federally matched funds.



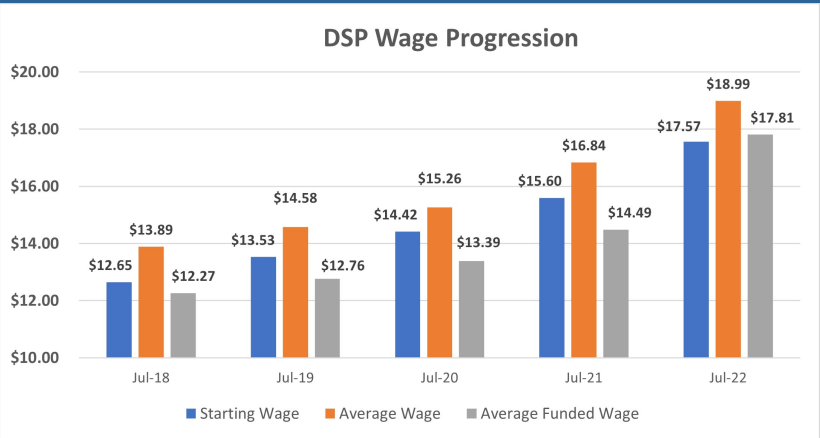
Protect your investment and continue fully funding I/DD rates while prioritizing DSPs!

In 2023 we must continue to increase DSP wages by supporting HB 2457!

HB 2457 will make two critical long-term investments in Direct Support Professionals:

1. Moves average DSP wage to 150% of the Portland metro minimum wage to recognize the value of the DSP workforce- that this is not a minimum wage workforce. Also ensures this essential workforce receives an annual increase above minimum wage.
2. Covers the costs of employer AND employee contributions for Paid Family & Medical Leave to ensure every dollar directed toward DSP wages stay as wages and supports new recruitment and retention opportunities.

Average Wage Providers Pay Versus Wage That Is Funded:



Amanda Dalton | Amanda@DaltonAdvocacy.com
 Jack Dempsey | Jack@dempseypublicaffairs.com



HB 2457

**Value the Work.
Raise the Wage.**

ODDS POP 132 - Targeted Rate Increase
Includes wage inflation and rate increases that bring DSP wages in payment category 1 to \$19.36, payment category 2 to \$20.38, and to \$22.42 in payment category 4 in the first year of the biennium. Increases the health insurance assumption to \$628.45 (currently \$525) per employee per month and adds the 0.4% employer Paid Leave Oregon payroll tax pick-up.

\$162M

The Math:
General Fund: \$162,144,945
Federal Funds: \$294,067,672
Total Funds: \$456,212,617



HB 2457 - 150% of Minimum Wage + 1% Paid Leave Oregon Pick-up
This bill will make further investments into DSP wages - because DSP work is not minimum wage work! HB 2457 statutorily sets DSP wages at 150% of the metro minimum wage and includes the full 1% Paid Leave Oregon pick up (0.4% Employer + 0.6% Employee pick-up).

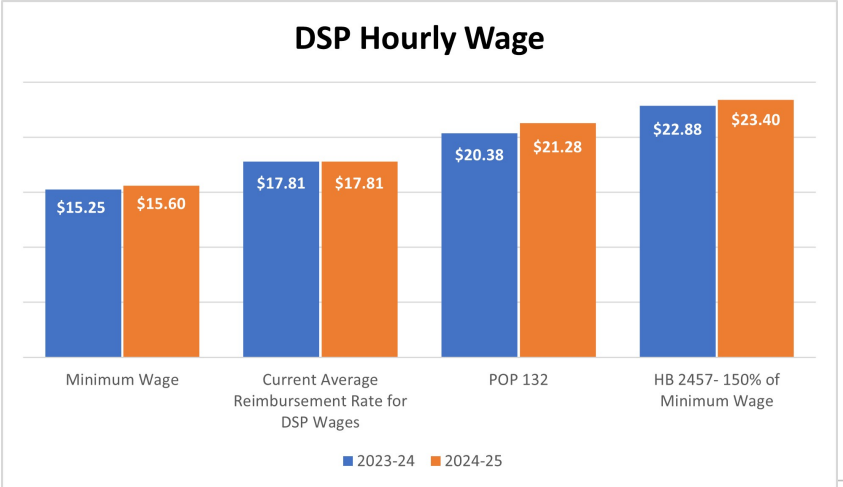
\$116.9M

The Math:
General Fund: \$116,913,261
Federal Funds: \$215,343,792
Total Funds: \$324,349,246



What do these investments mean for DSP wages?

Total GF Investment: \$279M



Value the Work. Raise the Wage.