

ALBERTINA KERR

February 27, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

Chair Campos and Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee,

Albertina Kerr is one of the oldest and largest nonprofits in the Pacific Northwest. We provide services and supports to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and mental health challenges in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, and Marion Counties. I am writing to advocate for a fully funded I/DD budget.

Kerr deeply appreciates and thanks the legislature for funding a new rate model last session that provided a wage increase for Direct Support Professional (DSPs) and that the Governor's proposed budget continues this funding. However, the funded rate model was developed several years ago and prior to the pandemic. As a result, the wage reimbursements built into the rates we receive from the state are far below what we pay our DSP staff.

- The average hourly reimbursement wage is 17.81/hour from the state
- The starting hourly wage for Albertina Kerr DSPs is \$18.00/hour
- The average hourly wage for Albertina Kerr DSPs is \$19.56/hour
- The Living Wage* hourly wage for Multnomah County is \$21.85/hour for a single individual

Despite Kerr finding the resources to go above what the state reimburses us our vacancy rate is a staggering 18%. The staffing challenges Albertina Kerr is experiencing are unprecedented. Our ability to recruit and retain DSPs is challenging when they can earn more working in almost any other sector.

I specifically urge you to support:

- The Office of Developmental Disabilities POP 132 that provides a targeted rate increase that addresses wage reimbursements for DSPs and provides increases for health insurance and the .4% employer Paid Leave Oregon payroll tax pick-up.
- HB 2457 that builds on POP 132 by moving DSP wages to 150% of the Portland metro minimum wage and the 1% Paid Leave Oregon. This change will positively impact DSPs and their families and provide much-needed stability for those with I/DD.

Sincerely,



Allison Stark
Chief Executive Officer, Albertina Kerr

*<https://livingwage.mit.edu/pages/about>