

Hello,

My name is Krista Smith and I am the Executive Director for RISE Oregon, a nonprofit organization that supports people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). RISE has about 700 employees and serves about that many customers with I/DD annually across 16 counties. We support people in their own homes, family homes, our residential and foster homes, in the community, and on-the-job.

I am asking the committee to prioritize DSP wages and support full funding of I/DD services in HB 5026. I am asking that you not only protect your previous investment, but that you continue to help move this workforce out of crisis by supporting HB 2457 - it moves DSP wages to 150% of minimum wage.

Though RISE, and many other providers, pay DSPs more than the amount that we are funded, we are still falling behind the pace of inflation. We continue to compete with other frontline workers, like fast food and retail, and struggle to hire and retain DSPs. As a former DSP myself, though rewarding at times, it can also be stressful and difficult work, hardly the minimum.

Through the pandemic, due to the workforce shortage, we had to reduce our capacity to serve, as the demand for our services increased. RISE's in-home services waitlist grew to over 400 families across the state and we had to temporarily close three residential homes; all because we do not have the DSPs to serve our communities.

Paying DSPs a living wage to support some of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens is a bipartisan issue that we can all get behind. It also overlaps with some of this state's top priorities like housing, healthcare and mental health. If passed, this will directly impact the lives of about 50,000 Oregonians; which includes people with disabilities and their DSPs.

DSPs, the people they support and their families are counting on you!

Thank you,

Krista Smith