

Submitter: Winifred Ju

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human
Services

Measure: HB5026

To the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I am a licensed psychologist and a Board member for Shangri-La -- a nonprofit organization serving people with disabilities in your district. I am writing today to recommend that you support HB 2457 and fully fund wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Right now, wages for DSPs, the people directly supporting the daily living and employment activities for people experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), are far too low due to rising inflation eroding our progress on wages.

This is a critical ask and one I want to make sure you understand. The support DSPs provide is far more than glorified babysitting. In fact, DSPs often act as the eyes, feet, hands, and even conscience for people with IDD. DSPs are friends, they are mentors, they are teachers, and they are doers. They fill in any and all gaps for the people they serve, and these gaps range dramatically -- from helping feed, bathe, ride the bus, console when needed, cheerlead, set and achieve goals, find employment, build self-esteem, teach self-advocacy skills, and so much more. DSPs support people in maintaining and building their independence, something most of us take for granted every day.

As a licensed psychologist, I owned and operated a community mental health clinic that specialized in supporting people with IDD. What I found through my years of professional experience is, the best way to support people living with IDD is to support their staff. That is why I am encouraging you to transform services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by valuing the work and raising the wage of Oregon's Direct Support Professionals. Please fully fund the new rate models and tie the average DSP wage to 150% of minimum wage. This not only impacts these workers right now, but into the future!

Respectfully Submitted,

Winifred Ju, PhD
Licensed Psychologist