

Sen. Wlnsvey Campos, Co-Chair
Rep. Andrea Valderrama, Co-Chair
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services
Support for HB 5026 – DHS Budget and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

March 2, 2023

Dear Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama,

As a 30+ year veteran of service to individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in the not for profit arena, I have never been more worried about the health of safety of those who chose our supports and their staff, namely, the Director Support Professionals (DSP).

We have survived staffing shortages, budget reductions, high turnover rates and even a pandemic, and I am now more concerned than ever. The ever-increasing minimum wage in Oregon, combined with high inflation and skyrocketing housing costs are making hiring and keeping stable employees next to impossible. DSP's can not afford to keep working at wages that are barely above the minimum required in our great state.

Understanding that turnover is a factor in any industry, I find it exceptionally important to note that turnover in ours means that a person may wake up to a near stranger, in their home, providing the most intimate levels of personal care. And while we will have screened and trained and vetted this person, the individual they are supporting likely has not. This new employee has not built a trusting relationship with them yet, they don't know the things that can make their day great, or horrible, and it isn't fair. I wonder how any of us would feel in that situation...vulnerable? Helpless? At risk?

I swore that I would never allow that to happen on my watch and you know what? I was wrong. It happened. I was heartbroken. I am not sure I will ever forgive myself. We have the opportunity, now, to make sure that doesn't happen again.

I am urging you to support a fully funded I/DD budget.

In 2021, the Legislature made historic investments in services to people with I/DD and for the first time our 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), we still struggle with staff shortages. We must continue to move the Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce out of crisis.

Additional increases in wages are needed to address the current workforce shortage.

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

I specifically urge you to support:

- ODDS's POP 132 – Targeted Rate Increase estimated to cost \$162M
 - 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.

- HB 2457 – 150% of Minimum Wage + 1% Paid Leave Oregon Pick-up estimated to cost \$116.9M
- This bill will make further investments into DSP wages – because DSP work is not minimum wage work! HB 2457 statutorily sets DSP wages across the state at 150% of the metro minimum wage and includes the full 1% Paid Leave Oregon pick up (.4% Employer + .6% Employee pick-up).

Please support those who support Oregon's most vulnerable citizens.

Please value the work and raise the wage!

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Stockton, Executive Director
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