



Dear Sen. Winsvey Campos and Co-Chair Rep. Andrea Valderrama,

**Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services**

I am writing to express my support for **House Bill 5026** and **House Bill 2457** and to ask for your support in ensuring that agencies serving people with disabilities in Oregon can continue to recruit, maintain, and develop a skilled workforce that supports Oregonians with disabilities.

While the Legislature made historic investments in services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in 2021, and the I/DD system was fully funded for the first time, we continue to face staff shortages in this sector. Although the investment allowed for an increase in wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) by \$1.25 per hour, with the current average reimbursement wage for DSPs at \$17.81, additional wage increases are needed to address the current workforce shortage.

To address this issue, I urge you to support **ODDS's POP 132 - Targeted Rate Increase**, which includes wage inflation and rate increases that would bring DSP wages in payment category 1 to \$19.36, payment category 2 to \$20.38, and payment category 4 to \$22.42 in the first year of the biennium. This increase would also raise the health insurance assumption to \$628.45 (currently \$525) per employee per month and add the 0.4% employer Paid Leave Oregon payroll tax pick-up. This targeted rate increase is estimated to cost \$162M.

Furthermore, I urge you to **support House Bill 2457**, which would make further investments into DSP wages. This bill 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). DSP work is not minimum wage work, and it is critical that we value the work and raise the wage. This bill is estimated to cost \$116.9M.

**In summary, please protect your investment and continue fully funding I/DD rates while prioritizing DSPs. By supporting House Bill 5026 and House Bill 2457, we can ensure that agencies serving people with disabilities have the resources they need to recruit, maintain, and develop a skilled workforce that supports Oregonians with disabilities.**

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

*Thomas Saucedo*

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