



Dear Co-Chair Campos and Valderrama,

Hope this letter finds you well,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 5026 and House Bill 2457, which will ensure that agencies serving people with disabilities can continue to recruit, maintain, and develop the future workforce that supports Oregonians with disabilities. As leaders in our state, your support of these bills is critical to ensure that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have access to the services and care they need.

Last year, the Legislature made historic investments in services to people with I/DD, and for the first time, the I/DD system was fully funded. While this investment allowed us to increase wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) by \$1.25 an hour, we continue to struggle with staff shortages. It is vital that we continue to move the DSP workforce out of crisis.

Additional increases in wages are needed to address the current workforce shortage. I urge you to protect your investment and continue fully funding I/DD rates while prioritizing DSPs. Specifically, I urge you to support ODDS's POP 132, which 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. This will cost an estimated \$162M, and it will also increase the health insurance assumption to \$628.45 per employee per month and add the 0.4% employer Paid Leave Oregon payroll tax pick-up.

In addition to POP 132, I also urge you to support HB 2457, which will make further investments into DSP wages. DSP work is not minimum wage work, and this bill will statutorily set DSP wages across the state at 150% of the metro minimum wage and include the full 1% Paid Leave Oregon pick-up (.4% Employer + .6% Employee pick-up). This bill will cost an estimated \$116.9M.

As you know, DSPs play a vital role in the lives of individuals with I/DD, and they deserve fair compensation for the important work they do. I urge you to value their work and raise their wages to ensure that we can continue to provide the highest quality of care for Oregonians with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Robert Mitchell