



March 3, 2023

To: Sen. Winsvey Campos, Co-Chair  
Rep. Andrea Valderrama, Co-Chair  
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services  
From: Stephanie Beeck, Executive Director  
RE: Support for HB 5026

Co-Chairs Campos and Valderrama and members of the committee,

I am Stephanie Beeck, the incoming Executive Director of Pearl Buck Center, an organization that supports about 300 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The individuals we support rely on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to live and thrive in their community. Examples of this critical support include: supporting someone build the skills they need to get and maintain a job; helping someone track and pay their bills so that they can live independently; providing intimate personal care; and making sure that someone with complex safety and/or medical needs is supported so that they can make the choice to stay in their family home and everyone is safe while doing so. Being a DSP is a complex job. It is definitely not minimum wage work.

Please prioritize DSP wages and support full funding of the IDD 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.

As a provider agency, Pearl Buck Center can't simply raise the prices for the supports that we provide to cover the increased costs of operating year after year. As a state partner, we rely on you to approve funding for these services. The current level of funding is based on studies that were completed years ago and are incredibly outdated. We can't continue to pay wages that are falling behind the market for the critical supports that are being provided. Our employees are having to make difficult decisions between staying at a job that they prefer, supporting a mission and people that they love vs taking a job that pays more so that they can pay their rent or afford food and childcare for their family. I urge you to rectify this situation by supporting HB 5026 & 2457 as our DSPs, the people they support, and their families are counting on you.