

Submitter: Emma Fery  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

Hello,

My name is Emma Fery. I am 25 years old, living alone and in the process of starting my bachelors program to continue my education. Currently, I work at Stayton High School in the Special Education Department with other really great educators and support staff like myself. We are working with kids that have various types of disabilities. No matter the disability, working with any special needs child is extremely difficult. It is also very rewarding to see a child who has a challenging time doing things (that we do easily & take for granted) smile and light up like a Christmas tree when they succeed. It truly one of the best feelings in the world. I love my job and my coworkers will tell you the same thing.

During our day, we go through many ups and downs. Our higher needs kids sometimes require multiple people to assist them in tasks such as: using the bathroom, walking, feeding, etc. We have specially trained people who are able to tube feed, spoon feed, change diapers, administer special medicines, etc. As a 'Special Programs Assistant 2' I am trained in everything to provide for those high needs kids. A couple other coworkers are also trained, but we are extremely underpaid. I myself am paid under \$17.00/hour and work 35 hours a week. For someone who is basically caregiving on top of providing assistance in a classroom we are grossly underpaid. The paycheck I receive every month is less than \$1,500. I live alone, work full time and am looking for a weekend job because I cannot afford to live.

I have a hard time understanding why as a crucial part of the Special Education Program I am so underpaid. I realize my fellow coworkers are as well, along with the teachers themselves. We have to put so much more effort into our kids, because of their needs. I will always want to be in SpEd, but it is hard to continue knowing I am paid just over \$3.00 the minimum wage. This needs to change. SB 283 & SB 489 need to happen.

Thank you,  
Emma Fery