

Submitter: Andrea Powell
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

DSPs sacrifice their time with their families, they put off their needs and their personal lives for the people they support. DSPs know a change to their schedule is just one phone call away. A coworker calling out sick is all it takes to change an 8 hour day to a 16 hour day. If someone doesn't come in, you stay, there is no closing time, you stay until someone comes to relieve you.

In July minimum wage will go up to \$15.45 in Portland. The starting wage at UHI is 16.50, barely more than a \$1 difference. How do we incentivize people to come and work for us? This is not a 9 to 5 job. This is a "whatever it takes" kind of job, and it requires a level of commitment that can be hard to find. If we can't hire staff, we can't just close up shop and go home, the people we support need assistance regardless of how many staff we have at any given time.

DSPs are the people we support's lifeline, supporting them with their daily activities like assisting with showers, brushing their teeth, medications, taking them to work, helping them go out into the community, teaching life skills, and in some cases, helping them to die with dignity. DSPs advocate for the people they supports wants, what they need, acting as a counselor, a chef, a medical technician, a maid, and the list goes on. This work can be mentally and physically exhausting. One way to help agencies hire and retain staff is to pay them a wage comparable to the services they are providing.

People that choose to work as a DSP are not doing it for the money or the recognition. There is little of both. We need to give people an incentive to walk through the door and become a DSP. When they do walk through the door, we need to ensure that they receive a fair wage so they stay. Please include POP 132 in the 2023-2024 budget so Direct Support Professionals can continue to do whatever it takes.