

Submitter: Laureen King  
On Behalf Of: Edwards Center  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

March 24, 2025 - Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez and respected members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

Thank you for being in Gresham this weekend! My name is Laureen King. I represent Edwards Center, a Washington County staple for more than fifty years. You're no doubt aware of the \$558M gap identified in the Wage and Rate study conducted at the legislature's request. The number seems shocking, but we need to recognize that this is not a sudden issue. This is indicative of an ongoing deficit. As a nonprofit Edwards Center doesn't need to worry about big returns. But we do need to pay our staff a wage that is sustainable, will keep them in this worthy field, and maintain a structure that's critical in the lives of so many people living with developmental disabilities. Edwards Center's current staff turnover remains just over 30%. Most other industries would look at that number as shockingly high. In Developmental Disabilities Services, however, I think we're probably among the lowest. The primary reason for leaving reported in exit interviews is DSP pay.

PLEASE, support increased funding for I/DD Services in the 2025/27 budget.

On a personal level, ten years ago, my son who was in 7th grade and was hard of hearing had funding taken away for deaf and hard of hearing services for 7th - 12th graders. This was supposed to save Oregon money. Several students left school and went to the Oregon School for the Deaf (OSD). Which Oregon state also pays for. At that time it was between \$7,000 - 10,000 per special needs students to keep them in their local school. I think it was many more times that amount per student to keep them at OSD. Mine didn't go to OSD. Instead, as his parents, we spent thousands of dollars over the next few years on private tutors to keep him up with his peers.

Don't cut programs. Please. Raise wages. Keep I/DD funded at the needed levels.

We are dependent entirely on state and federal match funds.

Very respectfully submitted,

Laureen King  
Employment Specialist