

Submitter: Todd Kieser
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Deserve Fair Wages

? DSPs perform essential, demanding, skilled work but are paid far below sustainable levels.

? The current rate models underestimate actual competitive wages, leaving providers unable to recruit and retain staff.

The current funding model for the services Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) provide does not allow us to attract and retain motivated individuals. Just as a supported individual gets to know and trust a DSP, they may lose that DSP to another vocation and now they need to get support from another person they have not yet developed rapport with.

The current models means our staff is unable to afford the average studio apartment without risk of a medical issue or car repair issue that will bankrupt them and put them at risk of joining the growing homeless population.

We do not need a new emergency board to spend money on when our employees and serviced individuals are struggling to meet basic needs.

Keep in mind the job conditions for a DSP, many DSPs have to drive to multiple appointments maybe 2-4 a day to get their 8 hrs. a day, some provide medications, some provide personal care (toileting), some are mediators for employers, or doctors. The job requires good writing skills, great people skills, software skills, ability to think on the fly, first aid/CPR, Oregon Intervention System training, reading comprehension of Individual support plans (some over 100 pages), empathy, and importantly a passion for helping others, and a requirement annually of 24 education hours.

People who fit this description and then pay them a wage that does not allow for personal peace of mind, a decent place to live, a running car, insurance, food, electricity and the ability to enjoy time off, is not how we should be treating these valuable caregivers. To get Direct Service Professionals the training required by the state and proper introduction and experience with an individual means it takes 4-6 weeks to get a new employee to replace another so it is expensive to replace people and upsetting to the clients.

Fixing the pay structure is not optional, it is not an afterthought once you fund other issues, this funding is the source of dignity deserved for our employees, and for the better service of those in need. We need a cost of living adjustment annually and before that we need to set a new base reimbursement that will provide DSPs some peace of mind and assurance that they are valuable and not disposable.

Sincerely,

Todd Kieser