

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

Hello Members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Mitchell, a coordinator for RISE Services, Inc.'s, In-home care department in Eugene, Oregon. RISE provides people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) with Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). RISE is a nonprofit organization that serves over 500 individuals statewide and employs nearly as many DSPs.

I speak among my colleagues and clients in concern for the growing threats to our field. The current funding gap, put forth by a Legislature-mandated DHS study, has reached \$558 million. This has devastating implications for RISE and all agencies who provide similar services.

My own story with RISE began just over two years ago. I was initially hired as a DSP with no prior experience in the field. My time working directly with IDD individuals showed me the sheer importance of quality, consistent care. The individuals I supported have experienced tremendous hardship in the form of bullying, discrimination, and systematic rejection that had left them with immobilizing fear of the world at large. As a DSP, I was able to guide them out of their shells, by showing them there are so many good people in the world to counteract the bad. With my support and their own motivation, those individuals have been able to navigate the community, realize their potential as artists, volunteers, and workers, and understand that IDD is far from a death sentence for participation.

As a coordinator now with a caseload of nearly 80 people, I see countless stories just like mine unfolding every day that RISE's staff work with the individuals we support.

This gap in funding shifts the burden of cost from state and federal sources onto nonprofits like RISE, who already face critical staffing shortages despite paying DSPs more than the state reimburses. The demand far outweighs the supply. IDD individuals will always exist, wherever the funding goes. As stewards of a functioning society, we have a collective duty to protect those among us who are most vulnerable. DSPs are the first line of support. Their services are essential. Yet they too are struggling to make ends meet with the current course of affairs.

I urge you to prioritize and increase funding for IDD services in the DHS budget to begin closing the \$558 million gap. We also ask that you fully fund HB 2150, which would provide annual cost-of-living adjustments to prevent us from continuing to fall

further behind.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Sincerely,
Ben Mitchell
In-Home Coordinator, RISE Services, Inc.