



April 25, 2025

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez and respected committee members,

I'm Allen Cress, Executive Director of Edwards Center, where we are proud to have served people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their homes, their jobs and their communities for more than fifty years.

In your roadshows over the last several weeks, you've no doubt noticed the many Oregonians wearing the black "Value the Work Raise DSP Wages" t-shirts. These are the Direct Support Professionals, and the people that support Direct Support Professionals, upon whose shoulders rests the weight of the state's \$558 million deficit in DD Services funding.

As DSPs we are as diverse as the community we serve and encompass a wide range of sexual orientations, racial and ethnic backgrounds, political affiliations, and geographic origins. We are a tapestry of individuals, each bringing unique perspectives shaped by our various identities. We and the people we serve live in every one of your districts. There is a common thread that pierces every perceived division and links all of us – our passion for the people we serve. We believe in them. We believe in their right to live their own lives. We know they are worthy of full inclusion in the communities we share. Our DSPs put **everything they have** into making that inclusion happen. It is passion and love that keep so many DSPs working every day, despite the sacrifices required of them. It is necessity that forces too many other DSPs to leave this worthy work behind in order to support their own families.

It is neither right nor moral to ask our DSPs to make the sacrifices they do to carry on their vital work. It is neither right nor moral to ask people living with developmental disabilities to open their homes and their hearts to a constant stream of new staff. When my wife and I got married, it took time to learn to trust and be vulnerable with each other. Can you imagine what it must be like for the people we serve, having to learn and re-learn and re-learn again to trust and be vulnerable with each new DSP?

You have the power to stabilize our state's DSP workforce. **Fund our DSPs.** They are worthy of our efforts and resources. The people we serve are worthy of our efforts and resources.

Very respectfully yours,

Allen R. Cress
Executive Leader, Edwards Center, Inc.