

Submitter: Alice Young-Thomas

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1505

I have worked in the I/DD services field for over 10 years and I have seen a lot of struggles as well as a lot of successes and every day I come in to support these amazing humans that I am lucky enough to get to know and spend time with the last thing on my mind is a paycheck or bills. Their well-being, happiness and health is the focus of all of my attention. However just because money is not the reason I do the work I do it makes it possible for me to be able to complete this work as well as every other support worker in this field.

If Direct Support Professionals are unable to earn a wage that makes it possible for them to live and pay their bills and expenses the only reaction to that situation is that support staff is forced to get a second job which effects their ability to focus and be successful at this job or worse they have to leave the field altogether in order to secure a job with a higher wage. This directly and detrimentally effects those individuals receiving services in the I/DD community. They are no longer able to complete the things they want and/or need to due to short staffing at their homes. They cannot go out to eat, visit the gym, attend classes, see movies or concerts, go on walks outside, go swimming or shopping, attend doctor's appointments just to name a few.

24- hour residential means 24/7 staffing in order for the individuals to be cared for and supported, that means someone with them at all times at home and in the community and it is very rare for these homes to only have one individual in them, they are often filled with 2-5 residents. If a program is short staffed that means none of the individuals are able to go out that day because there are not enough staff to split between home and community. It also means the level of care is greatly reduced as it is often a 1:2-5 ratio, in addition to staff needing to cover open shifts meaning they are working long hours, without breaks and oftentimes no days off just to keep the house staffed for health and safety. This is a survival situation in which no one is thriving.

This could easily be fixed with increased funding to ensure we are able to pay the Direct Support Professionals a wage they can live off of, a wage they support and a wage that means no one needs to turn away from this field because they cannot afford to live from the wage. All the supported individuals' lives would be better fuller, more vibrant and enriched and the world would be a better place for it.

This is a simple ask that would well and truly make a world of difference in so many

lives and the world as a whole. This community deserves to be supported and served and those taking on that role deserve to be paid a living wage matching their worth.