

Submitter: Mackenzie Foster
On Behalf Of: IEI
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1505

Senator Jama and Members of the Committee;

I am writing this letter to strongly oppose SB 1505, alongside the entirety of the IDD community and those who support them. Adding another costly layer of bureaucracy to services that are already so heavily regulated benefits no one, let alone the individuals who need the support. The IDD community already has a very in depth process to develop rules and policies, where everyone is welcome, including self-advocates, family members, volunteers, providers, union representatives, and state and county officials. Reducing this inclusive process to 11 unelected people who would be making decisions about an industry and community they don't understand will impact the quality of care and support that can be provided to IDD individuals.

This bill will create confusing wage and benefit standards that mean nothing if not fueled by the legislature. It standardizes services that are anything but standard, as each individual with IDD is unique and so are the services provided to them. There are various IDD services which are designed to meet not only the needs of the person using the services, but their desires. Standardization will impact their quality of life and impact their ability to live unique and fulfilling lives. Please do not remove the choice and individualism for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

As it is, providers already pass on any rate increases to their Direct Support Professionals, who spend each day dedicated to serving the individuals to ensure they live the best lives they can and make sacrifices to do so. This is evidenced by the Rate and Wage study, which you already paid for, that shows an average wage is well above what is being reimbursed. This study gives you the tools and information you need to fairly increase wages and benefits to a sustainable level, so why waste funding on a board to tell you information you already know.

This may be something you have read over and over again, so I want to also include my personal experience as a DSP. I currently support three amazing individuals with a range of IDD diagnoses and each of them require unique support that would be negatively impacted by an unelected panel of uneducated people attempting to standardize something so unique. I spend more of my time supporting them than I do at my own home, picking up extra hours and making sacrifices to ensure that they receive not only the best quality of care but their preferences and choices are respected. This is compensated through overtime and bonuses that this bill would affect, and without the compensation this quality of care would be impossible to

maintain. DSPs would require additional income, taking time away from the supported individuals and decreasing quality of care and life as people who do not know their quirks and individual supports are called in to cover these hours. To these individuals we are more than just staff, we play nurse, maid, friend, family, barber, cook, etc. As such, we deserve liveable wages, which will only happen if fair wage increases occur as the cost of living increases.

Please vote no on SB 1505. Don't let an unelected board take control of these essential services.

Sincerely,

Mackenzie "Rae" Foster