

My name is Dana Peterson and I am writing in support of HB 2964. My nephew, Derek, is 53 years old, he has cerebral palsy, and since the age of 18 he has been cared and advocated for and supported by Partnerships in Community Living, Inc. (PCL). Derek has been able to reach his full potential living in the community created by PCL. He has been able to live both with housemates as well as independently, he has found employment at jobs that have been meaningful to him, his medical needs are met, and he has community. All of this has been through the compassionate, caring, and comprehensive organization that is PCL.

The key providers who have ensured that Derek's life has been so fulfilling and his health and wellness maintained at such high quality are the Direct Support Professionals, or DSPs. The people PCL supports have challenging intellectual, behavioral and physical needs, and Derek is no exception. He suffers from a seizure-like disorder, his verbal abilities are moderately compromised, and he has a fair degree of physical limitations. I am a registered nurse and I can say that much of what PCL's Direct Support Professionals do is akin to what community/home health nurses do, but in many ways so much more. However, they get paid a fraction of what nurses get paid, in fact they don't even get paid half of what a nurse gets paid. I'm not suggesting DSPs should necessarily get nurses wages and benefits but I am saying that the average wage of \$13.94/hr. is not anywhere near enough. Compensation for the amazing dedication and comprehensive care, and support they provide for a demographic whose needs are highly demanding and for whom resources like PCL are crucial should be more than \$13.94/hr. This is not low-wage work and yet these low wages make it very difficult to retain the individuals who do this critically important work of ensuring a high quality of life for the people PCL supports.

DSPs are absolutely essential workers and have been on the frontlines of this unprecedented pandemic, they deserve to be adequately compensated. This would be a win-win because by increasing the income earning potential for DSPs it translates to more stable support for the people they provide care and resources to, and in the end that is what PCL is all about, people.

My nephew Derek has been so blessed to have been teamed up with PCL from a young age. I believe, without a doubt, that Derek's quality of life would not be anywhere near what it is today without the DSPs working at PCL and PCL's high standards and training it provides to their employees. PCL needs your help to ensure that they can continue to compensate their staff in a way that increases their ability to retain their staff and ensure consistency and continuity in the services they provide.

Please support the passing of HB 2964.

Thank you for your time and attention to this incredibly important bill.

Dana Peterson