



March 13, 2021

Dear Chair Lieber, Chair Nosse, and Members of the Joint Human Services Ways and Means Subcommittee,

My name is Anna Keenan-Mudrick. I'm the Executive Director of Community Access Services (CAS), a nonprofit provider agency serving Oregonians who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in Columbia, Washington, Clackamas, and Multnomah counties. And as of April 1st with the absorption of another nonprofit, Opportunity Connections, we now additionally serve in Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties. CAS is a member of the DD Coalition, the Oregon Resource Association, and Community Providers Association of Oregon (CPAO) – I am CPAO's legislative Chair. I am also the Legislative Chair and Board President for the Arc Oregon. I have a sibling who experiences a developmental disability, and I started my career in this field 28 years ago as a Direct Support Professional (DSP).

I am here today to urge you to fully fund IDD Direct Support Professionals in SB 5529.

Our current funding level puts at risk the health and safety of those we support, and perpetuates the nationwide, inequitable tradition of grossly underpaying the Women and Persons of Color, who represent a far greater percentage of our DSP workforce than exists in the general population.

In Oregon, 2019 Census Bureau figures indicate 27% of our residents are Persons of Color, and 50% are female. At CAS, 45% of our employees are Persons of Color, and 77% are female. Although Oregon's Pay Equity laws require parity based on comparable work and position, it does not address the historical, systemic devaluation of our workforce, perpetuated by the design of federal and state Long Term Services (LTSS) funding structures.

Then add to this, the disproportionality of COVID specific economic impacts on Women, Persons of Color, and individuals with disabilities. This pandemic has exacerbated long-standing inequities suffered by our workforce and by those we support who experience IDD.

The great news is that we have a clear path for you to consider in our fight for fair wages and equity, as described in Joanne Furhman's testimony! Fully funding IDD DSP wages will effectively mitigate this historical injustice, head on. Oregon is already a leader in the fight for fair wages. Oregon is sensitive to the inequity experienced by its critical, historically marginalized workforce. Oregon values the health, safety and quality of life of its citizens who experience IDD. And Oregon CAN do better by funding equitable, sustainable wages for the incredible women, minorities, and others economically oppressed who fulfill their vital, high-demand, skilled Direct Support Professional roles, day in and day out.

One additional argument to consider here – fully funding DSP wages provides a concrete way to advance the priorities outlined in Governor Brown's ***State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery***. Page one reads: "as we respond to this crisis and plan for recovery, we have an unprecedented opportunity and moral obligation to address the many structural barriers that disproportionately impact Oregon's communities of color and families navigating poverty." Fully funding IDD DSP wages in SB 5529 absolutely aligns with, and provides a concrete way to achieve, the systemic change Governor Kate Brown calls for in this plan of action.

It is the right thing to do for our committed, skilled, diverse workforce. And it protects Oregonians with IDD.

Most Sincerely,

Anna Keenan-Mudrick, MSW, Executive Director of Community Access Services
Legislative Chair of Community Providers Association of Oregon