



*a nonprofit organization assisting persons
with developmental disabilities
in the community*

1815 NW 169th Place, Suite 1060, Beaverton, Oregon 97006

(503) 533-4373 ~ FAX (503) 533-5833

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Tri-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, Rayfield, and members of the Committee,

I'm Anna Keenan-Mudrick, Executive Director of Community Access Services, a nonprofit serving Oregonians who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, in Hood River, Wasco and Sherman Counties thanks to a recent, exciting merge with Mid-Columbia nonprofit, Opportunity Connections. We also serve in Columbia, Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties. I started my career in this field 28 years ago as a Direct Support Professional, and have personal connection through a sibling who experiences developmental disability.

I urge you to fully fund Direct Support Professionals in this legislative budget.

Our current funding only allows us to pay our vital workforce slightly above minimum wage, which puts at risk, in resulting turnover, and exhaustion of staff working multiple jobs, the health and safety of those we support. And it perpetuates the nationwide, systemic tradition of devaluing and grossly underpaying Women and Persons of Color, who represent a far greater percentage of our Direct Support Professional workforce, than exists in the general population. Further, the COVID pandemic has exacerbated long-standing inequities suffered by our diverse workforce, and by those we serve.

Fully funding Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Direct Support Professional wages, through the path of POP 119, POP 120, 100% funding of the new rate model, and the passage of House Bill 2964, would effectively mitigate this injustice. Additionally, it provides a concrete way to forward the goals of systemic change Governor Kate Brown calls for in her "State of Oregon Equity Framework."

And I would LOVE for our essential, frontline Hood River employees to have the means to actually live in the community in which they work!

In close, Oregon is already a leader in the fight for fair wages, acknowledges the continued economic disparities experienced by many, values its citizens who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and Oregon has a responsibility and an opportunity to be a nationwide leader by providing equitable, sustainable wages for the incredible women, minorities, and others economically oppressed who are our Direct Support Professionals.

Most Sincerely,

Anna Keenan-Mudrick, MSW
Executive Director