

Thank you for the hard work that you do for the citizens of this great state of Oregon. My name is Brian S. Varley. I live in Salem, Oregon. I am a native Oregonian, Army Veteran and proud to be a product of the Oregon Education System. I am the Executive Director of Sunny Oaks, a previous President and current member of Community Providers Association of Oregon (CPAO) and "Uncle Brian" to my nephew, Dalton. In my very important familial role as Dalton's Uncle, I have legitimate concerns. Dalton is an energetic young man who loves music, movies, writing words, and familiar people. He has Autism and a seizure disorder. He needs significant supports. His parents are aging. I'm concerned that the amazing people that do Direct Supports will not be there for him and others who need those supports if we don't do something about adequately compensating Direct Support Professionals. During college, and after, I worked two full time Direct Support Professional positions at the same time to make ends meet. It was hard. It was also a beautiful thing to build a long-term relationship so that someone would allow me the honor of helping them to be safer, healthier, to learn new things, to become as independent as their disabilities would allow. I greatly enjoyed learning about developmental disabilities and physical disabilities and mental health challenges, as well as, medications, medication administration, doctor visits, range of motion, modified diets, tube feeding, insulin, behavioral supports, and so much more. Mostly, I loved building and maintaining relationships and achieving small and not-so-small personal goals for and with the people I supported. I had to leave that role. I could not financially afford to stay. I had college loans to repay and living expenses. I have first hand knowledge of the impact of low DSP wages. I could tell you many stories about Direct Support Professionals who work forty or more hours a week that cannot sustain an apartment, a car, not to mention the resources to provide for their families. DSPs often need public assistance while working forty or more hours a week. I have heard a DSP, Tim Staten, say "You are making me choose between my two families. My family at home and the people with disabilities that I support. I am not the only one. And, we love these people. They are our family, too." Tim's statement was in relation to the low wages for DSPs. As the Director of Sunny Oaks, Inc., I want to say that we, as an organization, care deeply for both the people with developmental disabilities we serve and for our DSPs. We want the very best for them. Currently the DSPs at Sunny Oaks, Inc. are paid a wage range of \$14 an hour to start and a little over \$17 for our longest term staff. Our average wage at Sunny Oaks, Inc. is approximately \$15 per hour. In addition, 26% of our overall payroll is utilized for benefits for staff. Additionally, as the Director of Sunny Oaks, Inc., I can assure you that Sunny Oaks utilized previous budget adjustments or increases to increase DSP wages and to address increase in health and dental insurance for our DSPs. Although wages have increased and benefits provided have not decreased over the last several years, the increase in minimum wage, which we support of course, and the cost of living continues to put us in the predicament of not being able to keep many of our long term, well trained, dedicated and trusted DSPs. And, recruitment and retention continue to negatively impact the people with developmental disabilities we support. The loss of a trusted long term trusted DSP for a person with developmental disabilities can devastate the landscape of their life. I sincerely and respectfully thank you for listening and I appreciate the hard work you are doing for all Oregonians, Honorable Chair, and the honorable members of the committee. Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Varley, MS