

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) provide crucial support to adults and children experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their work includes managing medical needs, challenging behavioral health supports, intimate personal care and support to maintain employment and make real connections in the community. They have a diverse workforce that is 87% women; 59% people of color; and 27% immigrant. They have persistently low wages – the current average wage is \$13.94. Being a DSP is not minimum wage work, yet low wages force agencies to compete with minimum wage jobs. While DSPs are NOT state employees, their work is almost entirely funded by state and federally matched funds (average of 98.2%). Low wages lead to burnout, high turnover and low retention. In addition to that, as essential workers, DSPs have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis while supporting a high risk population. We need a strong I/DD budget with a focus on DSP wages. DSPs deserve a significant investment in their wages in 2021. I am asking you to fully fund I/DD Direct Support Professionals - value the work and raise the wage.