



April 22, 2021

Dear Co-Chair Senator Johnson, Co-Chair Senator Steiner Hayward, and Co-Chair Representative Rayfield:

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) provide crucial supports to adults and children experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. Their work includes managing medical needs, behavior health supports, intimate care, and support to maintain employment and make real connections in the community. This diverse workforce is 87% women, 59% people of color and 27% immigrant. They have faced persistently low wages with a current average wage of \$13.94.

The work of DSPs is complex and definitely 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%). That is why we need your support to increase wages for this crucial workforce. Please support a strong IDD budget with a focus on fully funding DSP wages. These workers have been on the frontlines through the COVID-19 crisis and were a lifeline to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities during last summer's wildfires and Oregon's winter ice storm. They deserve a significant investment in their wages in 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Theisen".

Margaret Theisen
Executive Director