

I am a Direct Support Professional and Homecare Worker. I have worked as a DSP for over 5 years. I started working as a HCW a couple years ago in order to get medical insurance because most small agencies that hire DSPs are not able to provide medical benefits. I also am an ambassador (volunteer) for the Residential Facilities Ombudsman Program. I hear about the extreme turnover of DSPs in group homes. There is turn over of DSPs in small provider organizations that serve clients in the community as well. Clients talk often about how heart wrenching it is to have their staff constantly changing. There is so much vulnerability for clients to have to share personal information and when they have to do it over and over again with high turnover of staff, it is dehumanizing. The work we do encompasses so many roles. Let me just share with you a few: we help folks with daily living/personal care skills, emotional support, connecting with their community, navigating complex systems, transporting, act as a life-coach, note-taking in meetings, organizing schedules and appointments, facilitate behavioral plans, translators (for folks who have varied communication needs), accessing free services, medical advocacy and safety protocol planner and trainer. Many DSP in group homes are also doing medical care and administering meds. Do you think those skills are worth more than \$12 per hour? I certainly do. I am fortunate that I work for an agency that values my skills and pays me more than the typical \$12 per hour, but most folks working in group homes receive this poverty wage! Can you see why there is high turnover? The expectation is that we work as a social worker and nurse but get paid half of their wage! Please consider allocating part of the budget to increase our wages for the dignity of people with disabilities so they do not have to suffer constantly training new caregivers because of high turnover and for our own personal dignity so that we can have a living wage and not have to work multiple jobs in order to get by. A country that demonstrates that it values caregiving in all its forms, in my mind, is the most beloved of countries. Let Oregon pave the way to show that a Care Economy is the right and just economy. Raising DSP wages as outlined in HB 2964 takes steps to do that. SB 5555 is the financial means for this bill. Thank you for your time. Dena Wilder