

Hello my name is Cheylene Willard and I am a Direct Support Professional at Community Access Services. I am advocating for a living wage for DSPs.

I am a DSP. I am a caregiver, providing others their daily needs such as eating, bathing and dressing. I am an advocate, speaking out for a better quality of life for those I serve. I am a cook. I am a housekeeper. I am a transportation provider. I provide medical care. I am a companion, a friendly face and an empathetic heart on the good days and the worst of days. I am behavior support during complex mental health situations.

In my career I have saved lives. Even when there is a risk to my own life.

This job is the most rewarding job I have ever had but it can be very physically and mentally challenging. This is why DSPs deserve a living wage. For all of the care we provide to others we deserve more care in return. We shouldn't be living paycheck to paycheck, always worrying about how to pay our bills.

More importantly the people we support need this wage increase too. The low wages DSPs are paid cause companies to be constantly understaffed with a high rate of turnover. This reduces the quality of life for the people we serve. Imagine having to wait to eat, use the bathroom or anything else just because there is not enough staff available to you.

This is not just a problem in Oregon. This is a nationwide problem, not only in our disabled community but our elderly population.

Most people will need assisted living services as they age. Raising wages for DSPs is vital. Every person deserves the best quality of life possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please help our most vulnerable people thrive.