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oregonsupportservices.org

February 15, 2021

To: Rep Williams, Chair, House Committee on Human Services
From: Jennifer Santiago, President, Oregon Support Services Association

RE: Support for HB 2964--Set rates that allow agencies to pay direct support professionals an average of 150 percent of state minimum wage.

Chair Williams and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Support Services Association is comprised of the 14 Support Service Brokerages across Oregon. We serve nearly 8,000 adults with developmental disabilities living in their own or family homes in every community throughout the state.

Oregon's IDD services give people with IDD the tools they need to be full members of their communities and live the life they choose. One of the most important tools they have is Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) they can hire directly from licensed agencies. Direct support is helping someone track and pay their bills so they can stay in their apartment. Direct support is supporting someone to build the skills needed to maintain a job. Direct support is making sure that a person with complex medical needs can choose to live at home with their family and stay safe while doing so. HB 2964 recognizes that direct support is complex, skilled work that should be compensated above minimum wage, and kept at 150% of that mark as our economy grows.

As members of the IDD case management workforce, we know that the service system grinds to a halt when there are no DSPs available for hire. Case managers spend countless hours attempting to find available providers to connect with the people they support. All too often, there are no provider agencies with staff capacity. When this happens, a person's goals of finding a job or learning home skills to move out on their own, go nowhere. Services that people so desperately need and are entitled to go unused without a skilled provider.

HB 2964 would bring stability to DSP wages, and recognize that this is not minimum wage work. Our society desperately needs more people to enter the caregiving professions. By creating a stable foundation of funding, we can attract qualified, committed people to learn and grow in this field. And by paying them a living wage, we ensure that those capable, experienced employees can afford to stay and do the work they love for the long-term. We ask you to demonstrate Oregon's appreciation for this

valuable direct support community by passing HB 2964. Oregonians with IDD deserve a stable foundation.