



February 15, 2021

To: Rep Williams, Chair, House Committee on Human Services

From: Katie Rose, Chair, Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition

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 Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of approximately 40 organizations and individuals across Oregon that come together to advocate for the services to further the values outlined in ORS 427.007: to support people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) to exercise self-determination, living and working in the most integrated community settings, and providing services for families to raise their children at home. Our members represent advocacy groups (including self-advocacy organizations), family peer supports, DD residential providers, DD supported employment providers, and Support Services Brokerages.

We all need help to do the things we want to do; we all rely upon the people and services in our communities. People with IDD who need support from Direct Support Professionals deserve a stable and reliable workforce to live and thrive across Oregon. 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.

Every part of the IDD service system fails to function when we do not have skilled DSPs to support people with their goals. Case managers spend countless hours attempting to find available providers to connect with the people they support. When they cannot find them, a person's goal of gaining skills to move out on their own goes nowhere. People with IDD lose their jobs due to inconsistent support. Services that people so desperately need and are entitled to go unused without a skilled provider. We look for creative solutions and systemic overhauls to solve the problem of dwindling provider supply, but the truth is, paying DSPs a fair wage would create stability that nothing else can achieve.

Stability is what is currently lacking in the experience of using these services. Life goals can be long-term, and people with IDD should be able to trust that they will have the support they need to work on them year after year. Instead, they experience frequent turn over and service gaps, causing them to have to retread the same progress steps over and over. Others who use these services to meet complex medical or personal care needs are stuck in a cycle of turn-over, explaining the personal details of their support needs and preferences over and over again to a revolving door of faces. When compensation is not a living wage, even people who are dedicated to the work cannot afford to stay.

We urge you to demonstrate Oregon's appreciation for this valuable direct support community by passing HB 2964. Oregonians with IDD deserve a stable foundation.