

To The Chair, Vice Chairs and Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

As a representative of the Oregon Association of Provider Agencies, comprised of many Medicaid in-home provider agencies employing the in-home provider agency DSP workforce, I submit that our association supports HB 2964, which will ensure DSP wages remain competitive with the rising minimum wage. The bill does not currently include the in-home provider agency DSP workforce, and we request that an amendment to the bill be made to include the in-home provider agency DSP workforce alongside the residential DSP workforce.

In-home provider agency DSPs serve a substantial number of Oregonians and provide support to ensure the health and safety of participants who live independently or in a family home. Approximately 76% of participants in the Oregon I/DD program reside in these settings. It is critical that funding be increased to assure these Oregonians that their chosen services will continue.

As the nearly year-long pandemic continues to keep some in-home agency programs severely curtailed, and with surviving programs only partially funded, in-home provider agencies are struggling to stay open. Add to this the rising costs of doing business in Oregon during a pandemic, and paying DSP's a competitive wage, and it is a recipe for a collapse of an important service offering within the I/DD landscape. With a lack of funding and as the minimum wage rises, it is increasingly difficult to maintain competitive wages for these highly skilled, in-home DSPs.

According to the Burns and Associates rate models established for both residential and in-home services, services are underfunded, in certain cases severely. For example, the in-home, one-on-one attendant care service, which addresses the health and safety of individuals, is currently funded at approximately 72% of the rate model. (See page 17 of most recent ODDS Expenditure Guidelines, compared with Burns and Associates Final Rate Models, Revision 2, page 5)

OAPA supports the passage of this bill to address DSP wages and we request an amendment to include DSPs that work within in-home provider agency settings. Our valued DSP workforce should be compensated for their highly skilled work with some of our most vulnerable citizens. Please consider adding an amendment to this bill that includes the in-home provider agency DSP workforce and please vote in favor of the bill with the amendment. The survival of numerous in-home provider agencies and the thousands of customers we serve are at stake.

"In-home provider agency" means an entity certified and endorsed by the Department of Human Services to provide community based developmental disability services.