

Chair Williams and Members of the Committee,

Living Opportunities is a provider organization in Southern Oregon, supporting over 350 adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to live in the same neighborhoods, work for the same employers and aspire to all of the same things that you and I do. We provide critical services in Jackson County for people with I/DD and at the center of that work are Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) who work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. HB 2964 will help to stabilize this critically important workforce. I urge you to pass HB 2964.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the I/DD workforce was already in crisis. Direct Support Professionals show-up every day to provide vital support for the diverse population of Oregonians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and yet we struggle to retain staff due to an inability to pay a livable wage. In the end, the people who pay the cost for this consistent turnover are people with disabilities.

Today, Direct Support Professionals need relief with increased wages so they can continue to support people with I/DD to stay healthy, safe, and achieve the goals that they have set for their lives. HB 2964 acknowledges the complex skills needed to do this work. The people who perform this critical work should be compensated commensurately. By maintaining the wage at 150% of minimum wage, it will support the stabilization of this workforce which is critical to the consistent staffing needed by the Oregonians supported by organizations like ours.

I know that you face difficult decisions in the days ahead, but I implore you to make the investment in these essential workers and support HB 2964.

Together with you,

Emilie Wylde Turner
Chief Executive Officer
Living Opportunities