

Submitter: Larry Williams

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

I am writing to encourage your support for HB 2457 and other related legislation that will improve the availability of qualified personal support workers and direct support professionals to serve children with developmental disabilities. The system as it presently exists is broken.

In our family's case, we have been approved for 40 hours per month for a personal support worker to provide after school care for our sweet 6 year old boy who is on the autism spectrum. However, we have been unable to find workers who are qualified and will work for the rates the state will allow. In the case of personal support workers, the current bargaining agreement now has a rate of \$17.77, but the people we think have the necessary training to help our son and assure he does not elope/wander cost somewhere between \$22 and \$35 an hour (with workers at the higher end having some specialized training in occupational therapy or speech therapy but not the license required to bill insurance).

While HB 2457 doesn't solve this issue for personal support workers, it does attempt to address the very low rates that agencies pay direct support workers who are assigned to help families. The one suggestion I would have is that the word "average" should be changed to "median" to assure that there are not just a few higher paid workers bringing up the average while not appreciably increasing the supply of workers to help families.