

Submitter: Cassye Bergeron
On Behalf Of: Albertina Kerr Centers
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure: HB2457

I have worked as a Direct Support Professional since 2017. I am a single mother of two special needs children, and I am doing it on my own. I have to rely on state assistance to support my children, while work supporting Developmentally Delayed Individuals. Since Covid, our DSP numbers in Clackamas county have dropped so low, that the loss of another single staff member would mean that I, a single mother, would be forced to spend less time at home caring for my own children, because there is no one to cover the floor at my group home. I have had to work, upwards, 90 to 100 hours in one week due to continued staffing crisis; and still have problems making ends meet at home for my own. Having a 150% pay increase would mean more applicants for my group home, because we know everyone is driven by money, and better financial stability for my children. When staff have little left of their own, work an excessive amount of time to make sure that those who can't care for themselves are cared for; the quality of care for each of those previous mentioned individuals declines. Direct Support Professionals need this to be able to continue to provide the best care possible for those who cannot care for themselves, their families and themselves. I have never taken a vacation. I have never been able to afford to take my children camping, and personally struggle to pay both rent and gas to get to work and to pick my children up from school. I am one in thousands of Direct Support Professionals in Oregon, who after having put in 100+ hours to make sure others needs are met, need our needs met also. This are the needs of DSPs, the needs of DSP families, the needs of our person's served, the needs of our group homes and the needs of our companies. In order for my company to be able to thrive and prosper, as it did before covid, we need funding, we need better pay to attract new hires, and we need better staffing. This bill is the answer.