

Submitter: Joan Schrader

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

I am Joan Schrader, Executive Director of Specialty Family Homes, an agency that provides attendant care to individuals severely affected by intellectual and developmental disabilities, I/DD, in Clackamas and Multnomah Counties. In our field, we must compete with companies that pay more than \$20 per hour to attract attendant care staff, Direct Support Professionals, called DSPs.

DSPs must be trained in the field of I/DD and are responsible to assure the health and safety of some of the most vulnerable Oregonians with disabilities. The skills required to perform this type of care cannot be easily measured, are extremely valuable and can only be attained by time spent gaining experience in this field. DSPs are trained and delegated by nurses to perform nursing tasks. DSPs are trained to understand what leads to violent behaviors, self-harming behaviors, and other dangerous behaviors of people with I/DD and to prevent the behaviors by supporting individuals according to their behavior support plans. DSPs are trained to accomplish the goals in each person's individual support plan. Due to the complexities of the care for individuals with high needs, it can take up to six months before a DSP feels completely confident in the care they provide to these individuals.

The value of a well-trained DSP is priceless in our field but companies like mine lose these DSPs to unskilled labor jobs that require no prior experience or training. One young DSP, Sam, began at my company the day after he turned eighteen. He was a natural in our field and after two years of training and experience he had a bright future as a DSP. We lost Sam as a DSP, however, because Portland International Airport offered \$5 more an hour to move luggage. While I do appreciate luggage handling at the Airport, losing a well-trained DSP because of the wage differential highlights why I am requesting that you vote yes on HB 2457.

Historically, DSP wages have been set by outdated studies brought before the legislature to demonstrate how wages for DSPs are determined. The legislature is currently relying on an hourly pay rate for DSPs that is the result of a study completed over eight years ago (2016).

This system of setting pay rates for DSPs ---looking backward instead of forward ---is the reason that the entire system of I/DD is in a DSP crisis. We cannot attract and retain DSPs with wages that do not move forward with current economic realities.

Passing HB 2457 ties DSP wages to 150% of minimum wage which is a logical and defensible decision because the legislature can thus directly fund DSP wages

according to a known parameter, minimum wage. Therefore, the legislature will no longer be subject to relying on outdated studies to make legislative decisions for DSP wages and can finally set a reasonable standard.

For these reasons, I kindly request the passage of HB2457.

Sincerely,

Joan Schrader
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