

Submitter: Jessica Brooks

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Dear Oregon Lawmakers,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill HB 2457 increasing the wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) in the state of Oregon. These individuals play a crucial role in supporting individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and their work is incredibly important.

I believe in the work that I and others do as a DSP sometimes goes unnoticed or many people have never heard of a DSP. When mentioning what I do I say "I am a DSP" in which they respond with a confused look and a pause of silence. I then follow it up by saying "I am a Direct Support Professional" again same response. I then proceed to go into more detail "I am a Direct Support Professional, I take care of individuals with IDD. I give them support in their day to day lives weather that be personal care, administering medications, cooking, cleaning, keeping up to date on any medical needs they may have, getting them out into the community to do the things they enjoy doing such as going to local lakes, hiking trails, parks, movies, the mall, going shopping and what ever else they may be in the mood for on any given day." They then respond with "Oh, wow that has to be so rewarding." It really is rewarding I get to help make a difference in someone's life. I get to be a part of helping them build independence and help them live a happy and healthy life. There is so much good that comes with this job, there is also the rough days. Some people I have supported have a hard time communicating to us what is wrong or if they are having a bad day. Sometimes the way they show their anger/frustration/pain is through physical aggression. In this line of work I have experienced being hit, slapped, pinched, scratched, grabbed, hair pulled, bit, kicked, things thrown at me and spat on. I still show up, I still have a passion and love for what I do.

That is what I and so many others do in this line of work and if I am being honest I am probably missing a lot of other aspects. The job we do isn't always easy, we really put in the blood sweat and tears. It is incredibly rewarding which for some thats all that matters, for others the compensation also plays a big part. I have seen a lot of amazing people come in and out of this field because they cant make ends meet, they get burnt out having to work while also working extra because we have been short staffed due to being unable to hire and retain employees. I've worked with a woman and she worked 40hrs a week here and worked 40hrs at McDonalds so that she could get out from living in her car. I worked with another great person who worked 40+hrs and was living in a motel because she couldn't afford to find an apartment. I have a few times given past co workers rides to and from work because

they couldn't afford gas for the whole week. With so many having financial struggles we have lost amazing people in this field which ultimately takes a toll on the individuals we support. They lose out on being supported by people who truly care they suffer by not being able to have enough staff to be able to do the things they want to do to have the best quality of life.

Raising the DSP wages is something that should have been done long ago. Companies have been in crisis mode since the pandemic and have still not recovered. Facilities have had to close their doors to people in the IDD community because they don't have people to work because of the underfunding. With that I say shame on those who are against this bill and prior bills like this. Now, we have a bigger problem people that were living safe and secure getting proper care/support from their DSPs are homeless or are struggling. It truly is a domino effect. The people in the IDD community shouldn't have to worry about where they will live or if they will have people to support them. Please support this Bill. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jessica Brooks