

In support of Bill HB 2457-

Hello I am Aleysha Kluver and I work for Partnership in Community Living (PCL). I am writing this to explain why our wages are directly affecting the continuity of care and need of persons experiencing disabilities in Oregon. Persons born or acquiring any physical or mental disabilities are something that at this point will not stop.

We will expect 1 in 33 babies born to have birth defects.

1 in 7 adults will acquire mobility disabilities, according to the CDC.

61 Million Adults and 17% of babies born in the United States are born with disabilities.

331.9 Million People (2021) are in the United States and 17% of that is 56 (plus) million.

56 Million

56 million people in the US will be born with disabilities.

I have worked with a few agencies that help support people in this field. I have seen people leave to go to fast food, customer service jobs, and even pumping fuel... solely because it paid more. I am proud of the work that we do. We help people experience the fullest in their lives no matter how complicated, painful, hard, or how much it impacts our own lives.

I will give you an example. My spouse and I both work in this field. He worked his regular hours and in addition to that he would work an additional 50+ hours per week. In many cases we wouldn't see our family or friends for weeks on end. We have children that have had to miss on time events. Weddings, Birthdays, Births, holidays, general family get togethers', and more.... Because we were needed. People in this situation needed the support of us (the staff) to make sure they continued with their fulfilling lives. I may receive overtime, but if it was the choice of overtime or seeing my family.... I would choose my family. We only have so much time with them. The reason I bring this up is because many more people would stay in this field if our wages were comparable to living wages. Say just 10 people were hired, and another 10 were retained for a year and they all worked 40 hours with zero overtime. That means that 28,800 hours a year would be picked up and that means that the overall cost would be less than if we are needing those hours filled with overtime. That also means that my husband and I could work our 40 hours or even a bit more to help with other circumstances. We could choose when and where we are needed, what places we help in, and still have work life balances. In addition that means that people supported would have more routine in their lives, get to experience their personal goals, and form supporting relationships that are more conducive to their lives.

Many of the people supported thrive on routines. Thrive on relationships created through our abilities as staff to help with creating these bridges in the community and lives. Sure staff could say "no" we aren't going to work. If everyone did this, if every staff decided to say "no" No one would be there. No one would be able to help continue these budding relationships and foundation in lives of those supported.

I am sure you have seen events like nursing walk outs. We are the 'nurses' of direct support. We have to make the choice of family or work. Friends or people supported. Doctors appts, dental, vision checks,

getting gas, grocery shopping, and even doing basic household chores, over sleep. Sleep because we are working so many hours to cover hours in which others aren't there to be a part of. In which we do not have enough staff retained to cover, mostly due to the lack of wages and that lack of wages directly changes retention and stress levels of staff and those supported.

I hope you know that I am not one to believe in handouts. I do believe in equality and developments in work and life should be beneficial to many. In this case.... The many need the wages to be fairly offered so that we can help keep those who in many cases are considered "less than" which they are not, continue with their lives. They only have so much choice in their lives. They should be able to have choices in who takes care of them and who is around. With the lessening of available staff due to non-competitive wages, it directly impacts their lives. It is a snowball effect. Wages>less staff>more OT> Higher stress>more staff leaving>higher stress... over and over again!

Please take this to heart.

Please know it is needed.

Please know, it is not just I Its persons supported too.

Thank you.

Aleysha