

Submitter: Stephanie Kwiatkowski

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Dear Representatives,

I am writing you in support of HB2457, to ensure Direct Support Professionals wages are funded at 150% of the minimum wage in the state, because I believe it is our duty to care for those who cannot care for themselves, teach those who need guidance and education, and support all Oregonians to be leaders in their own lives to the best of their ability. This is what our Direct Support Professionals do for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and this is why we need your support for HB2457.

I am Stephanie Kwiatkowski, Program Director of Ashland Supportive Housing and Community Outreach, Inc., an organization supporting adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Southern Oregon.

Throughout Oregon people with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on DSPs to provide their care needs including intimate care like bathing, oral hygiene, nail/hair care and shaving; social supports like maintaining relationships with family and friends, accessing the community (church, banking, grocery shopping and social events), meeting new people and chaperoning dates; medical care such as administering medications, delegated nursing tasks like changing a catheter, maintaining prescribed diets, contacting medical professionals and attending medical appointments; and sometimes this includes contacting emergency services, managing crisis situations and supporting people on Hospice. Everyday our Direct Support Professionals work to help people live their best lives and for each of the people we support that is different. All of these supports needs are better met with long-term employees that have the training, knowledge, and trust that develop and improve with time.

This profession requires dedication, an excellent combination of compassion and empathy and a reasonable wage. DSP wages rose significantly after you agreed to fund the current rate model last session. Thank you for this investment. We would not have survived without it and we need to protect and enhance this investment going forward.

Current reimbursements for these services were built on cost studies that are now years old, so even though service rate models are fully funded, the costs built into these models are significantly behind the current market. I have attached a flier that highlights these key points and shows how DSP wages consistently trend above the

reimbursement rate.

Supporting HB2457 will have a direct and long-term positive impact on the lives of Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities by increasing our ability, as provider organizations, to maintain long-term DSPs. Please vote yes on HB 2457. DSPs, the people they support and their families are counting on your support!

Sincerely,
Stephanie Kwiatkowski