

Submitter: Heather Houck

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

My name is Heather, i work for PCL and started out as a DSP over 10yrs ago, and a few months ago moved into a new role as an admin.

while i am now an admin, i still provide direct support.

PCL is an organization that supports about 300 people with disabilities with about 600 staff members, but 600 is simply not enough.

I am writing in support of HB 2457. It ensures that DSPs get the wages they deserve, by moving DSP wages to 150% of minimum wage and covering the Paid Leave Oregon Payroll Expense. 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.

The pandemic and changing workforce has continued to erode our progress on wages. Even though providers consistently pay wages above the amount that is funded, we still struggle to hire and retain employees.

This complicated, critical work is often paid less than fast food employees. i have personally known many who were forced to leave the job they love, making a difference in peoples lives, because they needed a better wage.

My husband has been urging me to leave for many years to help our financial situation, as well as have more time at home and time with him. we, as DSPs, often find it very difficult to find a work/life balance because of the staffing crisis. we are now stuck in a vicious cycle, we are short of staffed so we work a lot of overtime, which costs the agency more, and causes burnout, then staff quit due to that burnout, and the cycle repeats. i will say, in the past 10years, i have spent more hours at work, than with my friends or family combined.

This job is huge, full of massive responsibilities, caring for and keeping other human beings safe, while trying to help them live their best life. i will admit the thought of job with far less responsibilities, for the same wage is appealing and i pray that i never reach the point of burnout that i have to leave for my own health, safety, and sanity. 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. Please vote yes on HB 2457. DSPs, the people they support and their families are counting on your support!