

Submitter: Melissa Jeanes

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Hello, my name is Melissa Jeanes. I have worked as a DSP and program manager over the last 12 years in I/DD in Central Oregon. During this time I have been witness to both positive changes and negative changes in this field. Staffing has been one consistent during all of this time. I know that you have received plenty of communication in regards to the long hours, the exhaustion, the expectations put on DSPs to maintain exemplary care while running with a skeleton crew after working 60+ hours a week. So I'm not going to address that. I'm going to address some topics I don't think get enough attention.

Last night a perfect example happened. There was a staff member that had already worked a 12 hour shift only to discover they had no relief, nobody was coming in at 10pm to relieve her. She handled it with grace and said "It is what it is, I can't leave." And she was right. Unless someone showed up to relieve her she couldn't leave. Not without risking her freedom and her career as it would be considered abandonment, abuse, neglect.

We are trained in emergency situations like a natural disaster that if we are at work we are at work and we don't get to leave to go protect our families, we stay and protect the people we support. Yes we are aware of what we are getting in to, but because we are the type of people we are we do it anyway. We do it because we are caregivers. We CARE. And we want the people we support to live the best possible lives they can. We care if they are happy, we care if they are healthy, we care if they feel safe and secure. We care ourselves out of time with our family, we care ourselves out of rest, we care ourselves out of our own mental health needs. And because we care we are there no matter what. I think that gets overlooked when DSP wages are considered.

The good DSPs care so much that they would rather work themselves to the bone than have the wrong people come in to relieve them because they don't want the people we support to suffer.

And yes while changes have been made and greatly appreciated it hasn't been enough to get people in to work and stay. In my area you can go to the local fast food restaurant and start out at \$2 more an hour even after we got an increase. And logically making \$2 more an hour and not having to be literally responsible for people's lives sounds a lot less stressful and more appealing to those that have never worked in this field. If more progress isn't made getting and keeping good workers is going to get harder and harder. Please consider this and VOTE YES ON

THIS BILL.