

Submitter: Marci Kallinger

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Dear House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services,

My name is Marci Kallinger and I am the Executive Director at the Ron Wilson Center (RWC) in Monmouth Oregon. We are a provider that supports about 60 people and their families who have an intellectual/developmental disability and have about 150 employees which include 120 DSPs. The DSP's are the backbone of our agency and we would simply not be able to do what we do without them. Their daily responsibilities, tasks, and interactions with the people we support take specific skills and compassion that not everyone has. They save lives every day and should be paid accordingly.

Over the last three years, RWC has had to close homes, reduce capacity, and not accept referrals for people who need a placement very badly due to a lack of DSPs which is a direct result of low wages. My understanding is that the governor and the legislative bodies have so many priorities for this session but houselessness and mental health are at the top of this list. This is literally what we do. We provide good/stable homes and a living environment with trained and caring DSPs to provide daily support for people who face disabilities and other mental health challenges. Investing in DSP wages helps providers like RWC (and there are hundreds of us across the state) create and retain a stable workforce which in return allows us to expand capacity and help even more people stay off the streets and receive the help that they need and deserve.

The one pager briefly describes some of the difficult work that DSPs do every day, along with the financial ask. I recognize that it is a big one but to make real progress and create real change, we must start with giving our DSPs a living wage which is why I am strongly supporting HB 2457.