

Submitter: Rod Williams

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

Speaking as a current Direct Service Provider and former Employment Specialist/Case Manager for individuals with developmental disabilities and those with severe and persistent mental illness, I'd like to add my voice to those who know that these positions- and many others- are woefully underpaid for the jobs we do and the responsibility we take on in working with those who are "the hardest to reach, hardest to teach." My current position pays \$15.50/hour, just a rung up from minimum wage. I see signs at fast food places looking to hire at \$16 or \$17/hour, and I wonder what that says about the value we place on my skill set and those of my colleagues. In addition, there's the issue of "wage compression;" as the minimum wage rises, our wages typically stagnate so that we earn incrementally more than a minimum wage worker. It's unfair, and unjust, and it's a huge reason why there's a shortage of trained, educated, caring, and competent workers providing direct and needed services to disabled clients throughout Oregon. It's hard to be expected to continually provide for others when the workers themselves can't pay rent or utility bills or purchase groceries or always live one paycheck away from some devastating emergency. Passing this bill will be a significant step in human service agencies paying "a livable wage" and a good faith sign that the State is trying to do the right thing in compensating its front line workers at a fair rate commensurate with the "degree of difficulty" involved with most direct service jobs. Thank you for listening, and for voting "yes" on HB 2457.