

Submitter: Rylan Anderson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2457

I have been working as a DSP for nearly two years, and I did other care work prior. One thing that has been blatantly obvious to me since I first started working in this field is that we need as many compassionate, attentive, empathetic workers as possible. The people we support are owed the person-centered supports we strive to provide, and that is immeasurably more difficult to provide consistently when you are burnt out from not making a living wage, or from your house being understaffed because staff turnover is so high. Working a second job while doing DSP work almost always detracts from your ability to engage fully at work, and people should never be forced to do so just to make ends meet. Financial stress nearly always carries into our demeanor at work regardless of how we may try to leave our personal lives at the door.

DSP work is also a specialized field, more so than perhaps some may realize. Though there's a number of people we support who require primarily physical support (which is tiring and demands a certain skill set in its own right), many supported individuals also require a level of emotional support that, even when they have access to counseling, carries through in their daily life and falls on DSPs to assist them. The communication skills required to navigate emotionally tense scenarios on a daily basis absolutely deserve to be rewarded with a wage that's reflective of the skill level needed to perform our duties with the level of attention and care that the people we support deserve. The last thing any agency ever wants is for a valuable, emotionally intelligent employee to leave because they are not being compensated adequately for the amount of physical and emotional labor required in this line of work.

The people I work with do this job because we care, but our emotional investment should never justify us working for less than we deserve. Work that has a high value morally is so often undervalued economically in our society. This bill gives us at least one opportunity to start shifting the way we place value on socially important work, and I strongly support this increase in DSP wages. The more we are compensated economically for our labor, the more energy we can take away from any financial stress we experience and direct toward the work we do, which I believe we can all agree would help the people we support as much as the DSPs ourselves.