



Service Employees International Union Local 503

72,000 public services workers, care providers, and non-profit employees in Oregon.

House Committee Early Childhood and Human Services

HB 2457: DSP Wage increase

February 8th, 2023

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services, my name is Alice Longley Miller and I am here representing SEIU Local 503 and our Personal Support Worker (PSW) membership. I am here today to express concern with HB 2457 and ask that it be amended to include PSWs.

Our union represents Personal Support Workers whose work is very similar and sometimes identical to the work of Direct Support Professionals. Both types of workers are “attendant care” and perform the same services in people’s ISP. Right now, PSWs earn \$17.76/hour, which is significantly less than starting wages for DSPs. At the time of this testimony, there are many available positions offering a starting wage of \$24/hour. PSWs are doing the same work as DSPs, with the same training and qualifications. And all care providers are struggling with the high cost of living and record high inflation.

The work of DSPs and PSWs is not minimum wage work and both should be paid a living wage. Not only is increasing wages for these critical workers the right thing to do for people with IDD and their support staff, but it is also necessary to retain a quality workforce and meet the high demand for services.

The existing disparity between PSW and DSP wages is causing PSWs and Homecare workers to leave their positions for higher paid agency positions, which is ultimately driving up the cost of care for the state and further destabilizing the homecare workforce, which was already in crisis. We know that it is more costly to the state when clients choose to receive attendant care from an agency over a PSW. If we pass this bill without including PSWs, we can expect to see more hours filled in by agencies and the accompanying increase in costs per case in IDD. Including PSWs in this bill would prevent this disruption and is a more equitable approach than lifting DSP wages alone.

The need for better pay for direct care providers exists across sectors and across settings. We are supporting a bill that would establish a prevailing wage for Medicaid attendant across sectors – including DD supports and other settings like homecare. This bill, SB 602, would establish a workforce board and determine a prevailing wage for Medicaid attendant care. The board would include workers, employers, and people who

rely on Medicaid attendant care, who would work together to address workforce needs, including wage requirements for these workers.

We feel this is a better approach for a few reasons. We know that this workforce has a lot of overlap and are sensitive to changes in wages. By setting a prevailing wage that applies to all attendant care, Oregon can prevent disruptions to the workforce, promote equitable pay, uplift the care provider workforce, and raise standards for all.

Raising wages for all caregivers is a top priority for our union, and we look forward to working with the bill sponsors to ensure that PSWs aren't left behind by this policy change.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today,
Alice Longley Miller, MSW, MPH
Longleymillera@seiu503.org
Long Term Care Policy Strategist
SEIU 503