

Submitter: Stephen Mock

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human
Services

Measure: HB5026

My name is Stephen Mock and I am writing this to ask you to please prioritize DD wages and support full funding of IDD services in HB 5026. I am asking that you not only protect your previous investment, but that you continue to help move this workforce out of crisis by supporting HB 2457 - it moves DSP wages to 150% of minimum wage. This important bill is crucial to ensuring that Direct Support Professionals will be able to provide safe and effective care for Oregon's most vulnerable populations. Being a Direct Support Professional is a complex job. It means helping people manage complicated health conditions and challenging behaviors; helping people access their communities and communicate with others; supporting people with intimate personal care and daily tasks like bathing, dressing, and eating as well as entertainment and relationships. In short, it means helping people in all aspects of their lives and being called on to make life and death decisions. It is definitely not minimum wage work. I am writing to ask you to support HB 2457. This bill moves the average wage for Direct Support Professionals across our state to 150% of the Portland Metro Minimum wage. It also covers both the employer and employee cost of Paid Leave Oregon. In 2021, the Oregon legislature approved full funding of the IDD services rate models and service providers were able to make significant progress toward paying DSPs a living wage. Sadly, this was quickly eroded by inflation and steeply rising wages across all industries. The pandemic and other factors have strained organizations to the breaking point. I have watched organization after organization close services across the state, shrinking capacity at a time when need for these services continues to grow. ORA's member organizations cannot simply raise their prices to cover these increased costs. As state partners they rely on you to approve funding for these services. The current level of funding is based on cost studies that are years old. Providers are already paying DSP wages above the reimbursement rate, yet wages have still fallen behind market. Providers now compete with jobs like fast food that used to be considered minimum wage positions, and they are losing in this competition. We need your support to change this trajectory. We need HB 2457 to bump up DSP wages and to take these services into the future. I know you face a number of competing priorities but if we cannot support our most vulnerable families what will that say about Oregon? Passing HB 2457 will result in an immediate, positive impact on these communities. We saw your previous investment quickly reduce both staff vacancy and turnover numbers. People with disabilities and their families began to have a workforce they could rely on. Unfortunately, this was short-lived as rising wages and inflation quickly outpaced these gains. That is why the long-term answer is HB 2457. It will create stability in this workforce and allow organizations to continue to provide

this growing community with the quality services they deserve. Please support HB 2457.