

Submitter: Seneca Clemons

On Behalf
Of:

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

Measure: HB5026

My name is Seneca and I'm a Job Developer currently working with Pearl Buck Center in Eugene, OR. We serve many different people who experience a range of intellectual and developmental disabilities. The services we provide allow Oregonians to transition into the workforce, integrate into the community, grow their independence and get off of state-provided benefits. As a more vulnerable community, it is important for people with I/DD to have well-trained, competent and dedicated service providers who are able to work with their clients long term and build the relationships necessary to foster success. We are having nothing short of a staffing crisis in the I/DD services field, as we are plagued by low wages, high turnover and burnout. The people who are working to provide these services often have to take second jobs in order to afford to live and continue serving the community in this capacity. DSPs should not make barely enough to scrape by and deserve wages and support that reflect the tremendous service they do for our community. The path to providing comprehensive and effective social services lies in compensating those who provide them fairly. When we choose to do this, we demonstrate that we value the work that DSPs perform and we encourage the onboarding and retention of capable, responsible and effective staff. I urge you all to support HB 5026 and show both Oregonians with I/DD and their service providers that their work is valued. It is one thing to say that you support marginalized communities and those who work directly with them, it is another to "walk the walk" and materially demonstrate your solidarity. Opposing HB 5026 sends a message to those who work as DSPs, their clients and their families that you do not see the value in the essential work that they do to improve the lives of Oregonians across the state. I can only hope that when it is time for a decision to be made, you choose in favor of the very people who put you in office, who provide for the community, and who deserve to live and not just survive. Thank you for your time and consideration.