

I'm Dena Wilder, Direct Support Professional (DSP) and Provider Resource Manager for Lifesource Group. I have worked as a caregiver in one form or another since I was 12 and have worked for the disability community for over 40 years. I am writing in support of HB2457.

We both start by listening. You to your constituents and me to the adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities that I serve. We listen for ways we might facilitate improved quality of life. You use policy and I use direct support to help people live independently, engage in the community and achieve personal goals.

Not everyone has what it takes to be a caregiver...when my director sends me a new recruit, I am hoping they have social emotional intelligence and organizational skills. I cross my fingers they are resourceful, patient, able to stay present and aware of safety concerns and be excellent drivers. The initial training and job shadowing that I facilitate for new DSPs can take at least 40 hours and includes: 1st Aid/CPR, mandatory reporting, dignity of risk, self-determination, community resources, documentation, government acronyms, and specific supports for the individuals they will be serving. If they remain with us for a year, they will have 24 training hours annually on DEI and other topics such as autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, Down syndrome, disability justice,

mental health, trauma informed care and sexuality. This type of expertise does not sound like a \$17 per hour job!

I was recently at a car wash and saw a sign advertising that they start their workers at \$19-20 per hour! And I thought, how can we compete? HB 2457 is the answer and is asking for DSPs to receive 150% of minimum wage. Choosing a percentage keeps us from having to return to you begging for a dignified hourly compensation. Those of us who love this work are being stretched thin as coworkers leave for better paying jobs. Please pass this budget as it will enhance our quality of life so we can continue to do the same for those we work for.