

As of today I have spent twenty two years, nine months, and eleven days as either a direct support professional or a residential group home manager for people experiencing I/DD. It's a field that requires passion, empathy and the ability to wear many hats. On an average day as a DSP I was responsible for giving life sustaining medications, taking care of multiple peoples bathroom hygiene, and meet their need for comfort and support. If they were confused upset or scared, I would often risk being yelled at hit, bit, scratched or punched.

As a Manager I am still responsible for doing most of these activities as we still struggle to have adequate staffing. When I look at the wage we pay against the level of skill and commitment needed I'm not surprised. The emotional and physical toll of this job is immense, it consumes you. Missed vacations, missed children's ball games and exhaustion are normal occurrences. In my early career, I often worked extra shifts, sometimes back to back for multiple 16 hour days because there was no one else available. The money I hoped to offset the losses to the rest of my life was taxed at a higher rate than my normal pay so I would see next to nothing extra on my check. I relied on church food programs, second jobs and donating plasma to make ends meet. Today I have a list of resources I can share with my employees if they are going to run out of money before they get paid. I've made a fund from the cans we collect to help with gas for their cars.

This job has made me feel like a backstop, that without me and the other handful of committed people, the people we serve would go without adequate basic care. It is time these people get the financial support they need and deserve. *Please support POP 132 and a fully funded DD services budget increasing the wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)*

I realize that my own financial picture isn't great. I will need to work until I am seventy to maximize my Social Security benefit. I realize I will need to continue to work past my "retirement" and I will need to use the same resources I direct my staff to now since most of my benefit will go to paying my mortgage. You can change this for the people just starting their journey. You can help us attract and keep good people with passion, empathy and a commitment to this work by providing them a fair wage. If we don't do this now we will have more people retiring out of a system that hasn't adequately provided for them and they will be relying on other government supports.

In the past five years I have seen the lives of the people we support improve tremendously. Moving to more individualized care, better staffing ratios and this handful of people sticking around long enough to develop trusting caring relationships with the people we serve. Better staffing ratios have allowed us to help find them meaningful work and connections for them in the community. Please keep this going!

I know Oregon faces a number of huge challenges that need funding right now, affordable housing, homelessness, how do we address a changing environment and allow farmers and ranchers to continue their work? It must be daunting work and I am grateful for all your effort. This isn't a special interest bill, it serves all Oregonians by taking care of the hard working people throughout the state. I applaud your efforts to improve the quality of life for all Oregonians. Please support POP 132 and a fully funded DD services budget increasing the wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)

Thank you for all your efforts,

George M Davis

