

**To:** Joint Ways & Means Committee  
**From:** Kaitlyn Winter, Exceed Enterprises, Oregon Resource Association  
**Date:** May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023  
**Subject:** **Increase DSP Wages!**

My name is Kaitlyn Winter and I am a Program Coordinator with Exceed Enterprises. Exceed provides community employment, inclusion, integration, and life enrichment supports for Oregonians who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. We currently serve the communities of Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Lincoln, Marion, and Deschutes counties.

**The role of a Direct Support Professional, or DSP** includes providing direct care such as, bathing, feeding, toileting, meal prep, medication administration, delegated nursing tasks, behavioral and emotional supports. The scope of the work of a DSP cannot be understated. The people we support rely on us daily; their literal lives are often in our hands.

In 2009 I was hired as a DSP for a 24-hour group home supporting 5 individuals, 3 of whom knew only life in an institution. They grew up in the Fairview Training Center and were now living in a group home setting. I was hired at \$9.25, the highest rate based on my experience.

After 5 years I was only making \$10.25. Only a 1 dollar increase after 5 years of work. The wages were stagnant, and I had to make the difficult decision to leave after supporting these amazing humans for 5 years. How do you think that impacted them, and me? The turnover rate for DSPs is extremely high due to low wages and difficult work. Those that we care for consistently lose connections because of this. People that provide daily care to them, that they see every day, establish rapport with, begin to trust and one day, they're gone and a stranger steps in to do these intimate tasks. This cycle goes on throughout their lives; consistent loss of connections with people which leads to isolation, fear and uncertainty.

I have had the opportunity to climb into an administrative role. I may no longer be a DSP, but I work alongside these compassionate and hardworking people every day. People who have done this work for many years, people who have never done this work before, all who are drawn to the work. CLEARLY, they do not do it for the pay, but for the love of the work and the one's they support. People who, if afforded the opportunities for growth, like myself, would love to make this a career. But when their wages do not provide for them, how are they able to get that opportunity? So the cycle continues, and the one's who suffer most are the people who are entitled to the services of a DSP. Agencies reduce capacity, struggle to find DSPs, and thousands of Oregonians go another day being unsure of who will be caring for them the next day.

**I ask that you include ODDS POP 132 in the budget which outlines the funding needed to move this workforce forward. This proposed POP increases DSP wages and adjusts for inflation. DSPs impact the lives of Oregonians EVERY DAY. I implore you; value the work, RESPECT the work, raise the wage.**