

Dena Wilder's Testimony in Support of SB 725

To: Sen Gelser-Blouin, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

From: Dena Wilder, Portland Resident and DSP

Re: Support for SB 725, capping caseloads for IDD case management at 1:30

I have been a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in Portland since 2015 and have witnessed the importance of Personal Agents (PA) and Service Coordinators(SC). PAs and SCs are major players in helping folks with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) access and manage services. They have to learn a breadth of knowledge about a very complex system and have the sensitivity to serve their customers with dignity. It takes a committed human to navigate such things. The system can certainly wear one down and when their caseloads are excessive, they can burn out fast.

The past three years I have worked as a manager overseeing 20 DSPs for a small provider organization that I work for. I have witnessed a huge turnover in PAs and SCs the past few years. What does this high turnover do? It causes a customer to have to retell a brand new person about the most private aspects of their lives, rapport has to be built (once again!), and they may have someone very green to the process and not get the seasoned support they get from one who knows where all the resources are. As a manager, I rely on a PA/SC's knowledge of the customer to help us serve them with direct supports in the best possible way, individualized to their needs and style. If they are brand new, they are swimming in the dark, just as we may be, as we get to know the customer.

High case loads cause a PA/SC to have to choose what fires are most salient at the time and sometimes have to make some very hard choices. High case loads tax their ability to get things done on time. There is a ton of paperwork they are responsible for. It causes burnout.

Advocates, people with IDD who voice their concerns, are the ones who have brought this bill forward. They are the ones asking for a better way. They are the ones asking for a higher quality of service for their own dignity and the dignity of these very important players in their lives—the PA/SC.

I appreciate the consideration of this committee to move in favor of this bill and to cap caseloads to a max of 30.

Thank you for your time in reading all of our testimonies.