

Submitter: Shannon Kerwin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Hello Committee Members,

I am writing to you today to advocate for the much-needed increase in wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to a minimum of \$25 per hour. As a past DSP myself (and as someone who works closely with DSPs still), I have witnessed firsthand the vital role that these professionals play in our communities. They are the backbone of the services that support individuals with disabilities, enabling them to live fulfilling and independent lives. Which we all deserve.

The work of a DSP is both physically and emotionally demanding. These professionals provide essential care and assistance to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, ensuring they have access to education, employment, and social opportunities. DSPs often work long hours, provide critical care in high-stress environments, and form meaningful, trusting relationships with the individuals they support. Despite the importance of their work, however, DSP wages have not kept pace with the rising cost of living and the increasing demands placed on these professionals.

Raising DSP wages to at least \$25 per hour is not only a matter of fairness—it is an investment in the well-being of the individuals we support, the DSPs who care for them, and our broader community. By increasing wages, we will help ensure that DSPs are fairly compensated for their skill, expertise, and dedication. A higher wage will also help to retain the experienced and compassionate professionals who are so crucial to the success of the services we provide, as well as attract new individuals to this essential field.

Additionally, a wage increase will have broader positive effects on our community and economy. Higher wages for DSPs will allow them to support their families, reduce turnover, and improve the quality of care for individuals with disabilities. It will also create a more sustainable workforce, reducing reliance on temporary or underqualified staff and ensuring a higher standard of care.

For too long, the work of DSPs has been undervalued. Raising wages to at least \$25 per hour is a step in the right direction to rectify this injustice and ensure that those who provide life-changing care to individuals with disabilities are compensated fairly.

I urge you to support this wage increase to ensure that DSPs can continue to perform their invaluable work with the dignity and respect they deserve. Thank you for your

time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Shannon Kerwin
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