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On Behalf Of:  
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I have served people with developmental disabilities for a quarter century now. And while staff in this field have never been paid what they're worth, the problem is more glaring now than ever, and the people we serve are being harmed more than ever by our collective lack of investment in getting and keeping staff to keep them healthy and safe.

I've never seen turnover so high. I've never seen so many staff working full-time plus overtime and STILL unable to make rent. I've never seen so many programs shut down for lack of staffing. I've never seen morale so low among the staff that HAVE stuck with the job.

Our staff are asked to have the combined skillsets of teachers, therapists, nurses, chefs, and bodyguards ... but they make less money than they would waiting tables. I know this because so many of them ALSO have to wait tables in their rare time off from caregiving, so they can afford to continue taking care of the people we serve.

And this isn't sustainable. The cracks in the system are showing. People are unwilling to do a job where they might get physically attacked, or might have to deal with a medical emergency, or might end up liable for neglect because they didn't have enough people to do the job right... not for what we're paying them. And as a result, the physical attacks and medical emergencies and incidents of neglect are becoming more and more frequent.

All of this ultimately costs the state more money than paying DSPs well would cost. When there aren't DSPs able to keep people healthy and safe, they often end up on the street, or in jail, or in the hospital, and costing the state far MORE money that way.

The bare MINIMUM for Direct Support Professionals needs to be \$25 per hour, if we expect to get and keep good people in these jobs. Prevention isn't cheap, but it is ALWAYS less costly to a society - both in dollars and in human suffering - to prevent crisis rather than let crisis happen.