

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

Chair Lieber, Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Girod, Vice-Chair Gomberg, Vice-Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

My name is Naomi Fishman. I am a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and the Medical Director at Albertina Kerr. I am writing to advocate that funding be appropriated to increase DSP wages. My organization runs a number of youth and adult I/DD group homes staffed by DSPs. My team and I provide mental health services to some of the residents of these group homes. This means that I regularly have the good fortune to collaborate with our DSPs in supporting our residents. This offers me a direct view of how hard our DSPs work. I see them go above and beyond to support our group homes including working overtime when needed and changing their personal schedules with short notice in order to help at our homes. They work to support every facet of life; helping with meals, helping with activities of daily living, working as detectives to understand what need a resident has and how to creatively meet it. They plan outings and activities, help support finances, help ensure residents make it to doctor's appointments and help them advocate if/as needed. They administer medications, help navigate legal and insurance issues and much, much more. Every time I collaborate with our DSPs, I am struck by just how much they do, how creative they are and how much they give of themselves to the work. DSPs unquestionably deserve to be compensated better. Non-profit organizations like mine don't have the resources to make up the difference between state set wage and the wage DSPs deserve, though organizations like Kerr certainly try. We need to see the state recognize and value the work that DSPs do by allocating funding to support better reimbursement for this group of dedicated, thoughtful, creative and skilled workers. Thank you.