

Submitter: Heather Houck  
On Behalf Of: Human Beings Who Deserve Better  
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2150

Dear Chair Hartman and members of the committee,

I'm here to ask that you support HB 2150 with the -1 Amendment. This amended bill would direct the Department of Human Services (DHS) to include an annual cost of living adjustment into contracts with community provider organizations for the provision of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

DHS recently completed a study at the legislature's request that demonstrated chronic underfunding of these services has created a \$558 million gap between what providers are currently being paid and actual costs. This bill would keep that gap from growing larger by ensuring that annual increases of no less than the Consumer Price Index are included in DHS contracts for these services.

This bill will help Direct Support Professionals wages keep up with inflation at a minimum, preventing this vital workforce from falling further behind.

I have been in this workforce since 2012 and have witnessed the turnover created by this wage crisis.

yes, i said crisis. If you actually read what i said above, a \$558 million gap is not a small thing!

DSPs struggle with the thought of putting food on their tables, paying their electric bills, and having enough gas in their vehicles to get to work.

I can speak from my own experience, if we didn't have the support of both our families that we do with our housing, my husband and i would be living out of our car, and we are a two income household(2 full time adults).

DSPs put their whole hearts into this work, we are humans taking care of humans. We strive to help individuals live their best lives while we go home and hope the rent check doesn't bounce.

A DSPs job is a huge one, not only is there a large aspect of healthcare involved, along with mental health, and literally just assisting individuals with the everyday tasks every human being does... But DSP also strive to help those we support to live the life of their choosing, live the life they wish, live their "happy", and we hope upon hope to help them live their best and most meaningful life.

Yet, the role of DSP seems to somehow slip through the cracks and go unnoticed.

Well, notice this for me please.

Imagine for a moment, a person supported, who has lived their life believing they were mostly destined to be within the bounds Oregon.

Over the course of years and support they received from consistent dedicated DSPs and teams, they went to a Sturgis Rally, then later explored Alaska on a cruise, and then after close friends moved to Texas - they visited Texas and fell in love with the state! Now they go almost every year maintaining that friendship and connection. Then one day this individual was told they might have Spanish heritage and are saddened because they believed they could "never" get to see Spain to learn about their heritage...

But then this consistent DSP said "why not?" you've done all these other things... now, please, imagine this person as their mind suddenly realizes that the barrier they had melted away, their world opened up, and they just lit up with excitement at a new world of possibilities. Suddenly this individual is no longer bound by their disability and no longer afraid of log plane rides and currently saving every week for as long as it takes until they can get to Spain. This never would have been possible without this kind of trust and relationship with DSPs and the teams and support this individual experienced. Sadly I am only one person.

I was that dedicated DSP.

i have had use food boxes, i have been running on fumes afraid i would run out of gas, i have worried about my electric getting shup off, i have used my in-laws garbage service when we needed to, and ended up accumulating well over \$14,000 debt over the years in order to get by.

We need to bridge the gap, and at least TRY to pay DSPs what they deserve.

Please support HB 2150 with the -1 Amendment and prioritize funding for IDD services in the 2025-2027 Budget.