

Submitter: James Norris

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2150

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As both an employee of an agency provider and the parent of a child who experiences life with a disability, I can attest to the difficulties in hiring and retaining quality support service staff given the low wages for those who provide this vital support services. Our industry typically has turnover rates exceeding 40% for the direct support professionals. My daughter had no less than four direct support professionals over a six month time period.

I am writing to ask that you support HB 2150 with the -2 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.

These support professionals assisted her in accessing the community, understanding how she processed her environment, shopping and meal preparation and personal hygiene. This means they would assist her in proper bathing and washing her hair. Can you imagine being personally exposed to so many in such a short time period? Is this the level of care that you would want for yourself or a loved one? I assure you that it is not!

The lack of funding for wages that are paid to direct support professionals is appalling at best. Most organizations hire at a rate of \$17 - \$19 per hour. As an agency provider, I can attest that the funding does not cover wages, much less benefits that are essential to maintaining a consistent and trained staff to provide quality support services.

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. I implore you to read that sentence again. "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 helps Direct Support Professionals' wages keep up with inflation at a minimum, preventing this vital workforce from falling further behind.
Please support HB 2150 with the -2 Amendment and prioritize funding for IDD services in the 2025-2027 Budget.

Prioritizing the funding for IDD services is not just essential, it is a testament to our commitment to providing quality of life support services to our most vulnerable population. I invite you to close your eyes for a moment, imagine that you are being fed and bathed and explore if you would want your support service provider to be paid a livable wage while they attend to your personal needs. I am certain that you would want the best care for yourself, as would I and therefore this should make this an easy decision to support this vital funding.