

Good Morning, My name is Alyson Bicha and I work for Edwards Center. I live and work in Oregon City and am here in support of HB 5056

A DSP is essential to the lives of the people we serve. We assist in all aspects of living a life they deserve and are entitled to. We aid these men and women in dressing, toileting, medicine administration, meals, transportation to and from medical appointments, making sure they have access to their communities and social interactions by coordinating, and transporting to and from. We are their friends and a source of joy and entertainment and companionship. We know what they like and don't like to eat. We know what makes them smile or feel safe or calm.

We are rewarded with happy healthy well-adjusted human beings who smile or laugh or clap when we enter their homes.

What happens we get home? We struggle to pay our bills. We can't afford to visit our kids who live far away from us. We can't afford our portion of our health insurance. Many fellow staff members can't afford to buy a car and rely on public transportation to get to and from work, which can add hours to a day that is already exhausting. If we can afford to buy a car, we can't afford to put gas in our cars to get to our job we love so much. I have a resident who is nonverbal but knows American Sign Language. I would love to take a course to learn how to communicate with him more effectively, but guess what? I can't afford the tuition.

I am vital to these people's lives who mean so much to me. I deserve to make a living wage. My residents deserve staff who can afford to stay in this industry and provide consistent care. The turnover rate is high, which means these residents constantly have new DSP's who need to learn who they are and how to best meet their needs. In many cases, they don't understand why someone whom they trusted to assist them with personal care is gone.

None of this is fair, or right, or just.