

Submitter: Raelene Akgul
On Behalf Of: IDD Service Community
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2150

March 28, 2025

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2150-2

Chairperson, Members of the Committee,

My name is Raelene Marie Akgul, and I am here today to speak on behalf of the many individuals and families within the I/DD (Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities) service community. I am writing this letter to you to share a simple yet urgent message:

We need House Bill 2150-2 to pass for the sake of our most vulnerable individuals, their dedicated caregivers, and the future of this community.

For years, the I/DD service community has been underfunded, and workers who provide direct care and support for individuals with disabilities have not been given the financial recognition they so rightfully deserve. This bill would establish an annual cost-of-living increase, a lifeline that would help us ensure that wages can at least keep pace with inflation, something that should be a basic standard for anyone working in a field so critical to our state's most vulnerable.

But it's not just about the numbers; it's about the lives impacted. The workers who dedicate themselves to this work are not just employees, they are caregivers, advocates, and often, the only support system that individuals with disabilities can rely on. They go home every day knowing they've made a difference, but many of them also go home worrying if they can continue to afford their basic needs because their wages aren't enough to keep up with rising costs.

For many workers in this field, the decision to remain in this line of work is an emotional one. They stay because they are committed to those they serve, but many are forced to leave because they can't afford to support their own families. The turnover rates in this field are high, and when dedicated staff leave, the ones who suffer most are the individuals with I/DD. They deserve consistency, care, and stability in their lives, and this bill will help ensure we can keep the staff that they rely on.

As costs of living continue to rise—whether it's rent, groceries, or gas—those in our service community are being stretched thinner and thinner. Their sacrifices cannot continue to go unnoticed. It is time to take action, and House Bill 2150-2 is the step we need to show that Oregon values the I/DD community and the people who work tirelessly to make their lives better.

Please hear our plea. This bill will allow us to not only attract and retain high-quality caregivers but also ensure that individuals with I/DD continue to receive the care and

support they deserve.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to making Oregon a better place for everyone.

Sincerely,

Raelene Marie Akgul
I/DD Program Manager
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