

Submitter: Sheila Barker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

Co-Chair Campos, Co-Chair Valderrama, and respected members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services,

My name is Sheila Barker and I work at Edwards Center in Aloha, Oregon. We support adults with developmental disabilities to have lives worth living.

In order to do this incredible work, we hire Direct Support Professionals (DSP) to work intensively with those adults. DSPs administer medications, provide meals according to doctor's orders, maintain the household, assist with hygiene needs, provide recreation opportunities both in and out of the home, provide guidance on how to treat a significant other, and thousands of other tasks that an adult with developmental disabilities might need.

DSPs do this historically and currently for wages that make them eligible for SNAP and Section 8 housing. They make just over minimum wage. Many DSPs initially fall into the work and then fall in love with the work. Unfortunately, most cannot afford to continue.

Edwards has 116 DSP positions with 16 unfilled at any given time. Of course, we can't leave homes without staff so between relief staff and overtime, we always meet the needs. It's not good service to lack consistency. It causes anxiety for both the residents and the DSPs.

DSPs need a stable, livable wage that they can count on. Please provide this for them by supporting SB 5526. If not for them, for the lives that they touch.