

Submitter: Nathan Collins

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

Chair _____ and members of the committee, thank you for your time.

My name is Nathan Collins. I'm an assistant manager with Umpqua Homes. Before that, I worked as a DSP for 4 years.

According to this DHS study, IDD services are underfunded by \$558 million. How is it that in Oregon, we have thousands of fabulous caregivers who go above and beyond for the people we support while at the same time being underfunded and underpaid?

In my experience as a DSP, it's because we care for people—people who need us to help them live lives full of opportunity, vibrancy, and laughter. When DSPs are in the middle of care, we forget that we only make X dollars an hour. When we are caregiving, and we see their smile, hear them laugh, sing with them, cook with them, assist with adventures, see them receive a new wheelchair, get approved for a new communication device, we sit with them in the hospital, we mourn together when someone we support passes away, that is why we stay, not for the pay but because we make a difference in the lives we support.

The people we support deserve quality care; I believe we all agree with that. DSPs also deserve to be paid fairly. It should not be a question of whether you can afford to be a DSP with low wages, but rather whether you have the heart of a DSP. Fully funding IDD services will allow providers to retain DSPs with a heart for caregiving. Please support Senate Bill 5526. Thank you, and I'm open to questions.