

Submitter: Kimberly Kerby

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

I have worked in this field for over 30 decades, when Fairview was closing. The work that DSP's provide and have from the beginning has not been valued nor compensated for the care/work/support that is provided on a daily basis. The wage gap has a concrete amount showing that gap and the chronic underfunding. The number of individuals that need support isn't decreasing, but only increasing. The number of DSP's is decreasing due to wage gaps, rising costs, which means people leave jobs that they value, simply because the work they enjoy does not allow them to provide for their families.

The amount that is incoming, from ODDS is a finite amount, hence the DHS Wage and Rate study, highlighting a lack of funding and investment in the DSP workforce.

I have long said that this is the hardest job you'll ever love. DSP's perform the work of CNA's, nurses and even individuals families. I have held the hand of someone that was passing away, because they had no family. I have made sure that every aspect of someone's life was tracked, because they had health issues that could land them in the hospital or worse. Caring for someone with kidney shunts, g-tubes, chronic seizures that only stop with medication after following Dr orders and allowing them to seize for 5 min, knowing that if the meds didn't work, that person and I were going to be in the Emergency Dept for hours, to get the meds that would stop the seizure. I started with wages for this job were \$3.50 and I had to take a second job to make ends meet.

Dealing with families and their attitude of looking down on DSPs because they felt guilty not being able to care for their son or daughter, while treating the team as if we were dumb. All the while we were taking their family member to Dr appts, celebrating holidays and birthdays because the family was absent.

I have worked on physical therapy with people that have muscles that are weak and been so proud of their progress to stand again or pick up a cup/utensil so they can feel proud of themselves.

This job is rewarding, and tough. It's never been one that you are going to get "rich" from, BUT it should be one that you can make a living doing.

Our agency works really hard to provide for the team, and while there are dedicated team members, there are never enough and there is not an infinite amount of people willing to do this job. An increase in wages would help to mitigate that, give provider

agencies some way to compete with the burger joint down the road that pays more and it would give stability to the IDD community to know that their DSP will be around for longer than a month or two. That security means a lot to me and to other DSPs.

Thank you for you time.

Kimberly Kerby