

**Good afternoon co-chairs and members of the committee.** My name is Megan Rodriguez, and I am a Direct Support Professional. I work with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and today, I need you to hear me- really hear me- because lives depend on it.

Right now, **33,000 Oregonians** rely on ODDS support—**10,000 children, 20,000 adults.** People just like you and me. People with hopes and fears. People who love, who struggle, who dream, who deserve to thrive.

They enjoy the same things you do—walks in the park, TV marathons, going out to eat, concerts, painting, even sneaking snacks late at night. And just like you, they face obstacles—loneliness, anxiety, loss, medical crises, heartbreak.

But many of them also need **direct support** to live their daily lives. Some need a simple reminder to brush their teeth. Some need help sitting up so they can swallow their food. Some rely on us to shower safely, to grocery shop, or to communicate in ways others don't understand.

This job is **deeply rewarding**—but it is also **demanding, exhausting, and relentless.** The number of people willing and able to do it is **small.** Those who stay do so out of love, but love alone doesn't pay the bills. **If we can't afford to keep doing this work, we will have no choice but to leave.**

And then I ask you—**who will care for these 33,000 people?** Without us, who will do this work? Who will help them eat? Bathe? Communicate? If we cannot afford to keep doing this work, what happens to them?

Because the need will not disappear. The work itself is **non-negotiable.**

You have the power to make the right choice. **Prioritize Developmental Disability Services in the 2025-2027 budget but fully funding the Wage and Rate Model.** Keep these Oregonians supported. Allow caregivers to keep showing up.