

[SB 5526](#)

Dear Chair Hartman and members of the committee,

My daughter has Down Syndrome and lives in a group home. I am writing to ask that you support SB 5526 to fund a minimum wage of \$25.00 per hour for all Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) with rate structures that include annual cost of living increases so wages and benefits keep pace with inflation, and includes longevity pay to recognize and retain the DSPs and managers who have committed themselves to this work over time.

DHS recently completed a study at the legislature's request that demonstrated chronic underfunding of these services that has created a \$558 million gap between what providers are currently being paid and actual costs. This bill would keep that gap from growing larger. This bill will help DSPs wages keep up with inflation at a minimum, preventing this vital workforce from falling further behind.

And this is important: often DSPs have to leave their position with community providers because they are not earning a living wage. These DSPs are critical for the care and safety of the people served by community providers. DSP duties include dispensing vital medications, transporting clients to medical, dental and vision providers, meal preparation, toileting, bathing, house cleaning, socialization among the home's co-inhabitants, monitoring client behaviors, conducting regular fire drills, 24-hour coverage, and sometimes assist with hospice providers and family members approaching a client's demise. Their services are vital to the safety and well-being of the clients they serve. I implore to prioritize support of this wage legislation.

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April 2, 2025