

Submitter: Mika Shantie  
On Behalf Of: HB 2150 2  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

Having worked as a DSP and now supporting DSPs in my current role, it is truly heartbreaking to hear stories of our team facing tough choices between paying their power bills or buying groceries. DSPs perform essential, demanding, and skilled work but are paid far below sustainable levels. People don't become DSPs to get rich; they do it because they love people and are passionate about their work. We must value them enough to ensure they receive annual pay increases to keep up with the rising costs of living.

The current rate models underestimate actual competitive wages, leaving providers unable to recruit and retain staff. In our area, DSPs are competing with fast food and retail jobs, which often offer higher wages. While these positions are valuable in our community, they do not carry the same emotional and physical demands as providing care. On average, providers pay DSPs \$2.50 per hour over the state's reimbursement rate, currently modeled at \$18.77/hour. This is not sustainable, and we stretch our dollars to pay this amount to remain competitive in the market.

Investing in DSP wages is not just a moral imperative; it is a practical necessity for maintaining high-quality care and stability for individuals who rely on these supports. When DSPs leave due to low wages, it disrupts the lives of those they support, causing stress and instability. Hiring and turnover challenges further exacerbate these issues. DSPs love their work but may have to look at alternatives to support their families if wages do not improve. Many people in this field work multiple jobs to make ends meet and simply burn out or suffer adverse health outcomes. Nationally, the turnover rate for DSPs hovers around 50%, with burnout being a significant contributing factor.

Legislators have the power to make a difference. By adjusting the rate models to reflect actual competitive wages, we can ensure that DSPs are fairly compensated for their invaluable work. This investment will lead to better service quality, reduced turnover, and a more stable support system for those who need it most. It is time to recognize the critical role DSPs play in our communities and provide them with the financial support they deserve.

Thank you for your time.  
Mika Shantie