

Submitter: Ann Dahl
On Behalf Of: Karlie W.
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Good afternoon, members of the committee.

My name is Ann Dahl, and I work for Living Opportunities in Medford, Oregon. I have had the privilege of supporting Karlie, a woman who experiences developmental disabilities, for the past 19 years. She receives 24-hour residential support and depends on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to live a full and meaningful life.

Karlie's DSPs are not just caregivers—they're her connection to the things she loves and the life she's built. We provide essential, skilled, and demanding support, yet are paid far below what's sustainable.

This work isn't just about showing up for a shift—it's about truly knowing Karlie. It means understanding how to support her when she's overwhelmed, helping her communicate when words are hard, and celebrating every milestone she reaches. It takes tremendous skill, consistency, and strong trust—qualities that require time, experience, and a genuine understanding of the person being supported.

When we lose staff—because they simply can't afford to remain in this field—the impact is devastating. Karlie loses those she trusts most. She loses her stability, her progress, and her ability to keep doing the things she loves—like riding horses and going to work.

House Bill 5006 is an opportunity to invest in the stability of thousands of Oregonians with developmental disabilities by investing in the workforce that supports them. Please support this bill and ensure that DSPs are paid wages that reflect the value, responsibility, and expertise their work demands.

Thank you for your time and consideration.