

Submitter: Cari Shaw
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Hello,

My name is Cari Shaw and I am both a parent and support staff for people with developmental disabilities. I currently work for Living Opps in Medford Oregon, my son is in a group home through Community Life. I am able to see how wages affects families and staff, how much effort staff put in to help the people they support. I have seen, both personally and professionally, how wages and turn over rates affect the people we support. People with developmental disabilities thrive on routine and the bonds they make with staff who support them, I have seen this with my son, who is 25 and has autism. I have also seen this with the people I support. Having staff stay for a long time definitely improves their quality of life and helps them thrive. I have seen staff, both at my job and my son's group home, who need 2 jobs just to make ends meet or work overtime due to understaffing with the same results, burnout and then leaving the job. The cost of living is affecting everyone, staff wages are not increasing with how fast the cost of living is increasing.

The people we support thrive with staff who are not burned out or overextending themselves. Families are seeing this, I know I see how it affects my son. I have been asked by his staff to help with his supports on occasion because they are short staffed at times. I have no issue with helping my son, but its so frustrating to know my son is paying for the supports through his rent and still there are times they are short staffed. I struggled to take care of my son alone 24/7, that is why I made the hard choice to find him a place where he could live independently with supports. I have felt that through my own personal experience that I am a good fit for working as a direct support staff, I know it means I have the chance to help people but also get the rest I need between shift.

I know its similar for the families of the people I support through Living Opps, Ive seen and heard their stories. Families want the best for them, they want to see them thrive and grow more independent. Constant changing staff and staff burnout does not help, it has the potential for staff making mistakes due to fatigue or overextending themselves. I know I want the staff supporting my son to feel rested and appreciated. I don't want to see his staff feeling they need to work overtime often or 2 jobs just to be able to afford housing or food. I see that at my job, with my wages. I've had some weeks where I have worked 50+ hours (I work night shift) and my paycheck still wasn't enough to fully cover rent or leave enough after paying rent to get enough food for 2 weeks. I make too much to qualify for any kind of assistance, food or rental assistance but yet am struggling at times with food insecurity. I know I am not the only one at my company to deal with this, we all do what we can to help each other

out.

An increase to our wages would have a huge affect, not only for staff but for the individuals we support. Staff will be able to get the rest they need, they will be able to afford the basics in life while still being there for the people we support. The people we support will then be able to grow, thrive and live life to the fullest. This includes working and being involved in their communities, which is only going to improve the community. For staff, the increase in wage would help people like me be able to afford the basics without worrying about an unexpected bill or emergency. Please consider increasing staff wages, so we can continue to support people in the way they need to thrive and thrive ourselves without the worries of how we are going to meet bills, etc. Thank you

Cari Shaw