

Submitter:

Colby Strong

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB5006

To the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

From: Colby Strong – Job coach

I am currently an employee of Living Opportunities, and have been for a little over three years. The work that me and my fellow colleagues do as Direct support professionals, Job coaches, and much other roles; are crucial to Oregon communities and to our society. Our funding as of the past few years has been stagnant, making it where us Living Opportunities employees are scrounging for additional income for ourselves and loved ones. When DSPs leave because they can't afford to live, the people they serve lose stability, routine, and even basic care. The individuals who receive our care, depend on us on 24/7 basis. DSPs already juggle life-and-death responsibilities for underwhelming wages, with the wages we have now, current staff is considering to walk away, not because we don't care, but because we can't survive. Nonprofits step in where the private market won't. Supporting folks with IDD isn't profitable, it's essential. Nonprofits like Living Opportunities, build long-term, community-based relationships with the people they support. We don't treat people like cases, we treat them like people. Investing in nonprofits is cost-effective. Institutional care or emergency interventions cost significantly more than stable, community-based support. Preventing crises is cheaper, than using Oregon tax payer's dollars to fix them. Nonprofits employ thousands of DSPs, managers, and staff. These are real jobs in local communities, even in rural areas where job options are limited. There is no Plan B. If these nonprofits go under due to lack of investment, there won't be another system to catch people. Families will burn out. Lives will be endangered. And the damage will be irreversible. If Oregon doesn't value its care workers, it sends a loud, clear message: vulnerable lives aren't a priority.

Respectfully,

Colby Strong

Job coach

Living Opportunities