

Submitter: Amber Myre  
On Behalf Of: Living Opps DSPs and ppl supported  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

April 2025

Co-Chairs Sen. Lieber and Rep. Sanchez, and Members of the Ways and Means Joint Committee,

My name is Amber Myre, and I am the Executive Director of Living Opportunities, a nonprofit provider based in Jackson County that has proudly partnered with the State of Oregon since 1974 to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to live, work, and thrive in their communities.

I am writing today in strong support of increased funding for ODDS services and to urge you to include critical investments in the 2025–27 budget:

- A wage increase for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs),
- An annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) as outlined in HB 2150-2, and
- Full funding for Oregon's Regional Family Networks and Policy Option Package 117 (POP 117).

Regional Family Networks are peer-led, community-based programs that help families raising children with I/DD navigate complex systems, access essential resources, and build lasting connections. These networks are a foundational part of family success—and they are proven to be efficient, cost-effective, and deeply valued by the families they serve.

Living Opportunities employs over 140 DSPs who work 24/7 supporting Oregon's most vulnerable citizens in their homes, workplaces, and communities. This work demands skill, dedication, and professionalism. Yet today, state reimbursement supports average DSP wages of just \$18.77 per hour. While we pay our DSPs an average of \$2.50 more per hour to remain competitive, we still cannot match the wages offered by other healthcare, caregiver, and retail jobs.

The 2025 DHS Rate & Wage Study identified a \$558 million gap in funding and recommends wage increases to stabilize this essential workforce. It is not equitable to approve a \$75 million SPA increase for one portion of the workforce or expand new services such as Agency with Choice while the base system remains so significantly underfunded.

Every minimum wage increase—another \$0.35 this July—worsens the gap between what providers can afford to pay and what DSPs deserve. HB 2150-2 would begin to correct this unsustainable cycle by ensuring annual adjustments tied to inflation. Providers like Living Opportunities cannot raise prices to meet rising costs. We rely entirely on the funding approved by the Legislature. Without urgent investment, the workforce—and the individuals and families who depend on these services—will continue to fall further behind.

The people we serve—and the professionals who support them—are your constituents. They are counting on you.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to a stronger, more inclusive Oregon.

Sincerely,

Amber Myre

Executive Director

Living Opportunities

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