

Co-chairs Leiber & Sanchez, and rest of the committee,

My name is Natasha Atkinson, and I have the privilege of serving as the CEO of Umpqua Homes, Inc., in Roseburg. Today, I am here to highlight the urgent need of **\$558 million to properly fund IDD services**. After the DHS Wage & Rate study, conducted at the legislature's request, we now have a concrete amount showing the true funding gap, \$558 million dollars.

This number is remarkably high, and it reflects chronic underfunding and the urgent need for investment in this workforce. Without action, providers face high turnover, service disruptions, rising costs, and reduced access for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). **Most providers currently operate at a deficit, relying on rapidly depleting reserves.**

Every year, community providers advocate for higher wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). The current rate model reimburses at about **\$18.77**, and yet UHI pays an **average wage of \$20.12**. We strongly value our DSPs who perform **essential, demanding, and skilled work** and UHI is not alone in this. **We must build a system that supports Direct Support Professionals. Please support HB 2150-2!**

Investing in DSP wages improves service quality and stability for individuals who rely on these services. When DSPs leave due to low wages, individuals face disruptions and must adjust to new caregivers, which can be incredibly challenging. DSPs love their work but often seek alternatives to support their families.

Providers cannot increase rates or DSP wages on their own; we depend on state funding and the federal match for state allocations. Unlike other industries, IDD services have **no built-in cost-of-living increases, no private pay market, and limited fundraising options**. Without increased funding, service access will shrink, and providers **will be forced to close or reduce services**. In addition, it is unequitable for the legislature to approve a \$75 million SPA increase for bargained PSWs and a NEW service, Agency with Choice, when the base system is underfunded!

Legislative action is needed in the 2025-27 budget. The IDD workforce crisis cannot wait—immediate investment is needed to stabilize services. **Prioritizing IDD funding will prevent further workforce shortages and service disruptions.**

I ask you to champion increased IDD funding in the 2025-27 DHS budget. Please prioritize funding for IDD services and provide any increase possible to begin filling the \$558 million gap.

Thank you for your time.