

Elaina Young
Independence Association INC
LD 1932

To the Honorable Members of the Committee,
My name is Elaina Young, and I am a Direct Support Professional. I am here today in support of LD 1932, not just as a worker, but as someone who sees every day what is at stake.

I want you to understand what this bill means in real human terms.

Every day, DSPs walk into people's lives at their most vulnerable moments. We are there when someone is scared, overwhelmed, confused, in pain, or lonely. We help people through seizures, panic attacks, grief, medical crises, trauma responses, and ordinary moments that feel impossible without support. We celebrate their first words, their first job, their first time going into the community alone. We witness their setbacks and their triumphs. We hold space for all of it.

This is not a job you do with your hands alone. You do it with your heart.

I want to share one moment from my own work.

I support someone who struggles deeply with anxiety and communication. When I first met them, they barely made eye contact and often shut down completely when overwhelmed. They didn't trust easily — and honestly, why would they? So many people had come and gone.

Over time, I stayed. I learned their cues. I learned what fear looks like for them before it turns into a crisis. I learned how to speak in a way that feels safe to them. Slowly, they began to trust me. And because of that trust, they began to engage with the world again.

One day, they told me — in their own way — “You make me feel safe.”

That is not a line item in a budget. But it is everything.

And yet, many DSPs cannot afford to keep showing up for moments like that.

We are asked to hold people's lives in our hands while our own lives feel unstable.

Many of us are choosing between groceries and gas, between rent and medical care, between staying in this work and being able to survive. We love what we do, but love does not protect us from burnout, poverty, or exhaustion.

When a DSP leaves, it doesn't just create a staffing problem. It creates a wound. It breaks a bond. It teaches people — again — that relationships are temporary and safety is fragile.

Low wages do not just hurt workers. They hurt the people we support.

LD 1932 is a chance to do better.

It is a chance to say that care work matters. That relationships matter. That the lives of people with disabilities and complex needs are worth investing in. That the people who show up for them every day should not have to sacrifice their own stability to do so.

I love my job. I believe in this work. I believe in the people I support.

But belief does not pay rent. Love does not cover groceries. Commitment does not fix a broken system.

LD 1932 will not fix everything — but it is a meaningful step toward dignity, stability, and respect for both the people who receive care and the people who provide it.

I urge you, from the bottom of my heart, to support LD 1932.

Thank you for listening. Thank you for caring. And thank you for the chance to speak for the people whose voices are too often unheard.

Respectfully,

Elaina Young

Direct Support Professional