

Owen Bernsee  
Creative Trails  
LD 1932

My name is Owen Bernsee and I am a DSP working for Creative Trails. My coworkers and I support participants to develop healthy relationships, provide amazing opportunities in the community to perform, create, and genuinely improve the quality of life of those we support. I have witnessed miraculous transformation and positive change in the individuals I have supported. I have also witnessed the distress, trauma, and dysregulation caused by the high turnover rate in this position due to the lack of proper compensation for this skilled and intense career. Principally, staff is grossly underpaid. We do not currently make a living wage. The positivity and therapeutic benefit we offer as DSPs is not adequately compensated.

The high turnover rate negatively impacts the individuals we support, damaging their trust, and often inhibiting them from forming positive meaningful relationships in their personal lives. Proper compensation will increase the quality of care, the ability for agencies to hire skilled workers, keep the workers they already have, and in turn have a net positive on the lives of those we support. As the cost of living has skyrocketed, our current wages are simply unacceptable. My current wage is not enough to support my basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. Please consider passing LD 1932 so essential support workers like myself can earn a living wage, and permit organizations like Creative Trails to attract more highly skilled workers in order to provide the individuals we support the therapeutic support and quality of life they deserve by supporting us, the essential workers a chance to survive, and provide these essential services.