



D.C. Developmental Disabilities Council Position Statement
B23-0214: Direct Support Professional Payment Rate Act of 2019
January 2020

The role of the D.C. Developmental Disabilities Council is “to strengthen the voice of people with developmental disabilities and their families in DC in support of greater independence, inclusion, empowerment and the pursuit of life as they choose.” As we indicated in our attached statement for the record at the time of the committees’ joint hearing in June 2019, direct support professionals (DSPs) are an essential element in promoting inclusion and empowerment in the lives of people receiving supports under the D.C. Medicaid waiver for people with intellectual disabilities and this bill can ensure retention of a quality DSP workforce in the District of Columbia.

The consistent narrowing of the differential between the District’s living wage and minimum wage is making it increasingly difficult for provider agencies to recruit and retain highly motivated and highly qualified direct support professionals. There is virtually no differential now between the two wage rates, and by July 2020 when the two converge there will be no incentive whatsoever for people to assume the arduous work of being a DSP rather than taking a far less demanding minimum-wage job. Moreover, DSPs working in D.C. will be less and less able to reside in the District given ever-rising housing and associated costs, and will also be increasingly reliant on second and third jobs in order to make ends meet. Neither of these is desirable for people in demanding DSP positions. In order to support everyone having a fair shot in DC, they need to be able to live and work in DC communities.

DSPs do important work to support our neighbors, friends, and family members with disabilities to live in their communities, to get jobs, and to stay safe. If we value our residents with disabilities, we must also value the people who support them day in and day out.

The Developmental Disabilities Council strongly supports Bill 23-0214, the Direct Support Professional Payment Rate Act of 2019. We recognize that there are budgetary factors that must be resolved, and hope the mayor will provide funding for this bill to be enacted.