

THEY DESERVE MORE

A Statement from "They Deserve More," a coalition of more than 30 statewide agencies representing thousands of people with disabilities and their caregivers

Illinois Senate Contradicts Earlier Advocacy for DSP Wage Campaign

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Those who support children and adults with disabilities in Illinois have been part of a strong advocacy campaign to draw attention to the worsening workforce crisis. The goal is to pass and have the Governor's signature on legislation (SB955) that would increase wages to \$15/hour for direct support professionals (DSP). Many of these individuals earn \$9.35 as their starting salary, which is well below the federal poverty line. These same staff have been working without increases in some cases because of the lack of a rate increase for such supports in the last decade.

Late last night, the Senate offered an amendment to their proposed budget package that contradicted their earlier action this month pledging to raise DSP wages to \$15 per hour. The budget offered by the Senate only dedicates \$35 million to address the workforce crisis. This amounts to a 50 cent per hour raise for DSPs.

As the coalition has reported in information shared widely with the Administration, the General Assembly, and the public – you can make \$13.38 starting at Walmart or \$13 an hour starting at an Amazon warehouse. We are concerned about the disparity of the budget amendment (\$.50/hour) and the Senate's passage of SB955 (\$15/hour entry wage).

Our message and our fight is "They Deserve More" – those with disabilities and the people dedicated to supporting them in their independence.

The Coalition has been lifted by the support of members of the Senate in their passage of SB955 and their continued work with us to find a solution. We urge reconsideration of this proposal and continued dialogue that brings a real solution to the challenges of recruiting and retaining quality staff who are charged with the health, safety, and well-being of the more than 27,000 citizens of Illinois who depend on them.

www.theydeservemore.com