

## **BLS SIGN ON**

Acting Commissioner William Wiatrowski  
Bureau of Labor Statistics  
United States Department of Labor  
2 Massachusetts Ave NE  
Washington, DC 20212

Dear Commissioner:

We write to urge the Bureau of Labor Statistics to develop a standard occupational classification (SOC) designating Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) as a discrete class of workers. This action will not create any additional costs but will bring many benefits to an entire sector of disability services. Notably, it will allow states and employers to more accurately understand workforce trends in this sector, which will influence public and private decision-making and job creation.

Providers of home and community-based services (HCBS) employ DSPs for the important role of providing community supports to children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). DSPs are the backbone of these supports, with complex duties that are not adequately captured by existing standard occupational classifications. Providers are concerned that the current classification system is affecting state and federal agencies' policy decisions, such as rate-setting, leading to negative longstanding effects in the retention and recruitment for this workforce.

This is deeply concerning because the single biggest issue facing the agencies that employ these workers is the inability to recruit and retain DSPs in the face of sky-rocketing demand. Nationwide, the turnover rate is approximately 45%, and many agencies experience persistently high vacancy rates. This turnover rate means that people with IDD are not receiving the stable services they deserve, nor achieving their highest level of independence. While turnover is a multi-faceted problem, action from the Bureau of Labor Statistics will be an important step to solving this challenge.

As the principal federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is essential in collecting and analyzing the economic information essential to support public and private decision-making. Currently, the BLS has SOCs for home health aides and personal care aides, which have some overlap with DSPs, but these classifications do not adequately capture this vital occupation. By designating the DSP as its own SOC, the BLS will be in a position to capture much more precise and accurate data specific to the profession, which will in turn assist federal and state policymakers to inform and impact future policy.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, which will allow for the collection of meaningful, relevant data on this essential sector of the workforce.

Sincerely,

cc: Alexander Acosta, Secretary, Department of Labor