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# OPINION: Time for action

How you can help direct support professionals help others

Monet Cephas (https://njbiz.com/author/monetcephas/) // September 25, 2023 // 3 Minute Read

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(mailto:?subject=OPINION: Time for action&body=Since I first began working in the nonprofit space as a Direct Support Professional in 2017, I have felt a sense of joy going to work every day to support... You can read the content in details following link https%3A%2F%2Fnjbiz.com%2Fopinion-time-for-action%2F)

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Since I first began working in the nonprofit space as a Direct Support Professional in 2017, I have felt a sense of joy going to work every day to support individuals with disabilities. Watching each person achieve their goals and live more independent lives makes the long and challenging days worth it.

Joining the direct support field all started for me when I had friends tell me, "Monet, this type of work is perfect for you!" And they were right. The nonprofit industry is where I knew I belonged. I always wanted to make a difference in people's lives, and this is where I found that outlet. When I landed my first job at a group home, I felt the immediate sense that this was what I was supposed to be doing. That feeling is why DSPs join this field, isn't it?

I now work at Easterseals New Jersey, a nonprofit organization that helps enrich the lives of people with disabilities by providing opportunities to live, learn, work, and play in their communities. My area of work is at their Day Habilitation program, assisting individuals on their

specific goals. Each day, I stand by ENJ's mission to enrich lives; seeing the smiles on our participant's faces every day is the reason I stay. But can I really make this my career?

Over these past six years working as a DSP, I've witnessed so many individuals reach incredible milestones that would not have been made possible otherwise. That's the great part of the job. However, I've also witnessed many of my talented colleagues leave the direct support field due to being underpaid and underrecognized.

Without the more than 30,000 DSPs across the state, people with disabilities could not perform the tasks of daily living. DSPs are hardworking, dedicated individuals who wear their hearts on their sleeves, and organizations throughout the state are losing these great workers, resulting in a shortage of care. So ... what can we do about it? I want to see change.

My main goal as a DSP will always be to support individuals, but the lack of incentive to stay is causing many sites to suffer, resulting in less care for those who need it most. If New Jersey Legislature passed much-needed bills like Assembly Bill 508 (<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/S508>)/Senate Bill 2668 (<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/S2668>), we could have something to celebrate. This bill would provide for an annual cost of living adjustment disability services, letting employers keep wages rising.

DSP's do a lot but receive little recognition. It's time for action. If you're reading this, help us help others.

If the state provided more funding (<https://njbiz.com/more-details-reaction-to-njs-record-54-3-billion-state-budget/>) for disability and DSPs, I could make this my career. I could follow my passion for supporting people with disabilities while also being able to support myself. I've always said treat your workers well, and you will see great results. Companies all over are trying to accomplish this, but we need help to make it a reality.

New Jersey, I know you want to see all your residents thrive. So, take action to make it happen. Pass A508/S2668. Raise DSP wages. You wouldn't only be helping us; you would be helping individuals with disabilities and their families continue to get the proper care they need to live full, meaningful lives.

I get immense joy daily from helping change participants' lives at Easterseals New Jersey's Day Program. Let me continue doing it for years to come.

*Monet Cephas, lead direct support professional, has been at Easterseals New Jersey (<https://www.easterseals.com/nj/>) for five years. Overall, she has worked in the direct support space for over 14 years because she loves the work and making an impact on every individual she gets to assist. She is dedicated to the job, but in her free time, she loves to spend it at home with family.*

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