SAIL believes that disabilities are a normal part of humanity. SAIL believes that no single person is average and that each person has their own unique compilation of abilities. SAIL believes every person is worthy of inclusion and that it is the legislature’s job to create public policy that supports our inclusion and removes barriers to accessing the larger community. This week, we’re talking about self advocates and employment! We are proud to live in a state that invests in tangible ways to support our uniqueness and to remove barriers that keep us out of our communities. The Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is tasked with managing contracts with counties and local organizations that offer employment opportunities for people like us! Likewise, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps us to find accommodations to address the ways we are different. We think both agencies are doing a good job with not enough money and ask that you make funding for these services a priority. You can help us by:

**Support the elimination of Sub-minimum wage**

We are asking that you support the elimination of sub-minimum wage (SB 5753). Sub-minimum wage jobs are not real jobs and the wages we get don’t come close to paying our bills. But, with job coaches and supportive employers, we can all find something fulfilling that contributes to the whole in meaningful ways. Meaningful, gainful employment is a crucial part of an inclusive society. We are people, just like you, who want to have purpose and meaning in our days and we believe that regardless of the job, we should be treated fairly and paid just like everyone else – minimum or higher wages.

Sub-minimum wage is an archaic relic of the 1930s. It dates to a time when children with disabilities were denied an education and before civil rights legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. It’s time for it to go! Sub-minimum wage doesn’t only affect high acuity clients, but it also affects low acuity clients equally, so please be fair and eliminate sub-minimum wage for Everyone!

**Secure rights of people who use DDA services**

The highest number of complaints handled by the DD Ombuds concerned autonomy and the exercise of rights. Current law sets out rights for people with developmental disabilities. However, many people with developmental disabilities, service providers, and family members do not know all of these rights or where to find them in the law. Currently, there is no one section of Washington law that spells out the rights of those who utilize DDA services. We need the rights of people who use DDA services in one statute as proposed in HB 1651 and SB 5843. These bills gather rights which are currently scattered throughout the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and puts them in one place in the RCWs. They establish certain rights for clients of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Developmental Disability Administration (DDA). They specify the right to personal power and choice, to participate in service planning, access service and healthcare information, file complaints and grievances, privacy, confidentiality, access to advocates, and rights upon termination of services.
Self-advocates in Washington State have been working to end sub-minimum wage for people with developmental disabilities (DD) by helping create and supporting legislation in the 2019 Washington State session. HB 1706 and SB 5753 were introduced in 2019 to end the practice of sub-minimum wages for people with disabilities. The House bill passed last year, amended to apply only to state agencies. We still need to eliminate the practice of paying sub-minimum wages from public and private businesses, but must balance that with making sure other services are funded to fill the gap, especially in rural areas.

TRANSITION SERVICES FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADS

We need to ensure that all students with a developmental disability are able to participate in transition services to help them move from high school into employment with the supports they need to be successful. In our state, we use a Basic Plus Waiver to support those students in getting and keeping a job. However, there is no guarantee that each student leaving school receives those waiver services unless the Legislature funds enough openings.

Although services in K-12 Education, Aging and Long Term Care, Foster Care, Corrections and other state services are Caseload Forecast (meaning legislators budget services based on the information of how many people will need services for the next year), DD services are not forecast, so there is no requirement to fund these services. SB 6040 and SB 6056 would address this problem by adding the Basic Plus waiver to caseload forecasting.

FUNDING FOR EMPLOYMENT / DAY PROVIDERS

Provider rate increases were included in the 2019-2021 biennial budget for many providers of services to people with intellectual disabilities. The intent was to help agencies providing critical services to people with intellectual disabilities keep pace with rising labor costs due to minimum wage increases and the increased costs of doing business. Unfortunately, Employment and Day Program providers were left out of that increase even though they are experiencing the same labor and cost pressures. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) has risen 2.9% for non-farm payroll for the last 12-month period according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

People with Developmental Disabilities Ask:

* Eliminate sub-minimum wage and ensure services are funded to fill the gap
* Caseload forecast transition students and place them on the Basic Plus Waiver
* Fund the 2.9% rate increase for Employment and Day providers