

2021 PIERCE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE FORUM SPEAKERS



Naveed Haziq; 31st Legislative District

Naveed graduated from the Sumner-Bonney Lake School District Transition Program and enrolled in the School to Work program. Naveed has a job coach, a care provider, and other services through DDA. These services are vital to his having and maintaining a healthy, community-connected life. “The transition program helped me develop good working relationships, good working skills, and life skills. I learned to bake cookies, and sweep, rake, mop, and clean tables.”

Priority: Implement the recommendations identified by the State Transition Collaborative committee, Ensure an increased provider rate for DDA community-based services



Heather Harper; 2nd Legislative District

Heather participates in Special Olympics and likes spending time with friends. She works for the office for the Governor as an office assistant. “I scan mail and create PDFs. The favorite parts of my job are being included and my coworkers. Working is important to me because I feel like I have a purpose. Having a job coach is important to me to help me monitor my work quality and help me learn new tasks. It is crucial for people with DD like me to have services to help me excel at my job.”

Priority: Implement the recommendations identified by the State Transition Collaborative committee.



Rainnie Teeter; 2nd Legislative District

“I work for CDS inside COSTCO where I demo foods for clients at COSTCO the last 3 years. My favorite parts of the job are getting paid and meeting new people! I have a very nice boss that helps me out. My job coach helps me understand the products. Work is important to me because I am buying my house, I pay my bills, and buy the things I need. I like to watch TV, play video games, word search, and hang out with family. I would like my legislators to know people are struggling to afford basic needs like medical, food and shelter and please don't take services away we need them.”

Priority: Ensure an increased provider rate for DDA community-based services, Implement the recommendations identified by the State Transition Collaborative committee.

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Mikayla Fernandez; 25th Legislative District

“Hi I’m Mikalyla, I love my job at MOD Pizza, My job is important!!! I set up the lobby in the morning and fold the boxes for the pizzas. My boss says I work well. My job coach works very hard to help me to communicate in different ways.”

Priority: Implement the recommendations identified by the State Transition Collaborative committee.



Ali Hunt Smith; 27th Legislative District

Ali is a naturalized citizen, retired healthcare professional, military veteran, and family caregiver. Her story speaks to the need for accessible and affordable housing options with services. Especially in her case when family caregivers could no longer meet the needs of her nephew at home. There was a long and complicated process to finding him a stable home with supports he needed in place.

Priority: Increase accessible and affordable housing options, including housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.



Dan and Mary Boyum; 27th Legislative District

Dan and Mary are siblings. Mary assists with Dan’s care since Dan moved to her house in 2010 from outside WA State. She was able to take the training to be a paid caregiver in 2017. Thanks to the waiver and community inclusion support, Dan is involved in a Barbershop Men’s choir and helps with the food bank at his church. Dan and Mary would like legislators to fully fund the extremely supportive DDA programs so all clients who are qualified, get waiver services.

Priority: Ensure an increased provider rate for DDA community-based services, Increase accessible and affordable housing options, including housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

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Elizabeth Rhonemus and Kisa Johnston; 29th Legislative District

Elizabeth (Lizzy) is a long-term resident of Pierce County and speaks about her own story of support from early learning and Early support for infants and toddlers as she navigated the process of her daughter’s diagnosis and getting needed services. Lizzy is now the Chair of the Pierce County ICC, sits on multiple policy panels, parent leadership boards, and supports other parents raising children with Autism in Pierce County.

Priority: Improve access to Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) services by eliminating families’ out-of-pocket costs



Cindy and Nate Becker; 28th Legislative District

Nate is an artist who loves people, living independently in his home, and his work at PC2. Cindy, his mother, speaks about her concerns as parents who have experienced major health issues and are not able to provide care at home. Nate has multiple disabilities and receives support from home care staff in his apartment. Cindy asks that legislators invest in community-based services, increased provider rates and access for all people with I/DD.

Priority: Ensure an increased provider rate for DDA community-based services, Increase accessible and affordable housing options, including housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.



Blake Geyen; 28th Legislative District

I use a speech device to communicate. I work for a nonprofit organization, and I live in University Place. I have Cerebral Palsy; I use a power chair. Communication is important to me because it allows me to get my needs met, share my ideas, thoughts, and opinions, and interact with others. It’s important for people to have access to technology services. There is a lot of stigma for people who use speech devices. I often feel like I am ignored in society simply for being unable to speak clearly and communicate quickly. I constantly need to prove myself to others. People with disabilities have unique abilities and everyone should have and equal opportunity to have their voice heard.

Priority: Build in language interpreter services for all DDA services to ensure equitable access to services and inclusion in the community for all individuals with disabilities.

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