



Building Partnerships
with people with
developmental
disabilities, their
families, our employees
and communities.

Please Support HB 4036

My name is Joanne Fuhrman and I am the Director and Co-Founder of Partnerships in Community Living, Inc. (PCL). PCL is a non-profit that originated in Polk County in 1986 to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities leaving Fairview Training Center. Twenty-five years later PCL provides services to over 160 individuals in comprehensive, 24-hour services, and over 75 individuals and families through the Brokerage system in 7 Oregon counties.

Our dedicated employees help the people we serve live safe, quality lives by supporting them in their homes and we help people make meaningful contributions to their communities through employment and community integration activities. Many are former residents of Fairview Training Center and came into our services with labels such as "difficult, aggressive, and medically fragile." These same individuals have lived successfully in our communities for 25 years. The services we provide allow some of Oregon's most vulnerable citizens the right to a life that is safe while valuing their gifts and contributions in a responsible and cost effective manner.

Our services, like all others statewide, have suffered serious cutbacks over the past two years. For PCL this has meant the loss of \$128,000 per month. These losses, coupled with rising costs associated with our work, have been devastating. Our employees from the top down have taken reductions in wages and benefits and we operate under a wage freeze, with no end in sight. We had to close two businesses that provided job training and reduced our administrative and support positions to "bare bones." With all these painful reductions we still had to reduce over 4,500 hours of direct support per month to the people we serve (approximately 25 FTE). We now provide minimal staffing patterns and have nowhere else to cut -- without seriously jeopardizing the health and safety of the people we are charged by our contract and Mission to protect. I have been very proud of our focus on values and our employees' willingness to make personal sacrifice to put those we serve first. However, all these cuts have not meant less need, or less work... I fear that our very dedicated employees will not be able to endure yet another devastating blow to the structure that supports the important work they do.

While implementing reductions, we have also worked closely with the ORA membership statewide and with the State DD office to do things differently and absorb some of these cuts through efficiencies. We continue to work towards other improvements, e.g. developing new service models and technological supports that can help keep people healthy and safe while still reducing costs. But human beings with severe physical and mental challenges need trained, consistent human support 24 hours a day for their entire lives.

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HOUSE REVENUE COMMITTEE
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We now face cuts in April that will mean another \$55,000 per month in reductions. Among my peers I am usually the one that says, "We will work this out," but this time I am here to tell you I am at a loss for how we can realistically take these cuts and survive. My heart breaks as I watch the organization I founded faced with the possibility of failing the people we support, our communities, and our employees. If we in the non-profit sector cannot afford to support these vulnerable people, what will become of them? Ultimately, the State could be required to support them, but only at costs far above our rates not to mention the human cost of people losing their homes, communities, and friends. We urge your support for this essential bill.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.