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April 6, 2015

To: House Human Services and Housing
From: Chris Burnett, ORA Executive Director
Re: HB 2756

My name is Chris Burnett and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Rehabilitation Association (ORA). ORA is the professional membership association for providers of services to individuals with disabilities.

We support the amendment of HB2756 to reflect the need for a broad based stakeholder task force charged with evaluating existing research and tools for direct care staff training that develops a professional career ladder, addresses a variety of support settings, helps to stabilize the workforce, reduces turnover and improves staff retention.

Oregon and the rest of the nation is in the midst of a direct care workforce crisis. Those workers include Direct Support Professionals employed by community agencies who contract with DHS to support individuals with IDD and Personal Support Workers who are hired directly by an individual with disabilities.

The good news is many industry experts are focused on this and have developed a road map and detailed research on how Oregon might be able to accomplish this goal while getting financial assistance from the federal Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) to pay for this training. They have gone so far as to crosswalk the Oregon requirements with CMS requirements.

Since 2011, the National **Direct Service Workforce Resource Center (DSW RC)** has researched, developed and validated a set of core competencies for the direct service workforce (DSW) funded by the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS). The DSW RC's Road Map of Core Competencies sought to systematically determine if core skills exist across the different human service sectors where direct support comprises a primary component of the long-term services and supports (LTSS) system and, if so, to disseminate this core skill set throughout LTSS systems to guide the development of education and training programs.

ORA has initiated conversations with those industry experts and engaged ODDS and others in considering the evidence based online training tool - the College of Direct Supports - and the training/credentialing model employed by the National Alliance of Direct Support



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Professionals (NADSP) rated highly by the DSW Resource Center for individual outcomes and staff professional development.

Education and competency based training programs based on the development of these core skills have the potential to strengthen the quality of the Direct Support Workforce and thereby improve service delivery. The DSW Core Competencies will inform and improve training efforts on multiple levels and across systems including:

- Aging and senior services
- Behavioral health services, including mental health and substance abuse
- Intellectual/developmental disabilities services
- Physical disabilities services

The Set of Core Competencies for the Direct Service Workforce (DSW) may serve as the basis for the development of career lattices and ladders that further recognize the many skills needed for direct service workers across service sectors. They provide guidance for the development of initial and ongoing training to promote direct service workers' continuing competency development.

The CMS Toolkit provides an overview of challenges facing the direct service workforce, including recruitment and retention of workers, and provides information, strategies and resources such as templates and planning tools that can be used to secure Medicaid funding for direct service workforce continuing education and training.

The purpose of the Training Resources Toolkit developed by the DSW Resource Center is to identify training and educational programs and stand-alone curricula that are available to help build staff competencies identified in the Core Competencies.

In short, there are good tools and planning advice readily available to inform the work of a targeted task force on this most critical issue for stability of a home and community based system of supports. ORA supports such an effort and would be happy to lend our support to this work.