



## Service Employees International Union Local 503

*More than 55,000 public workers, care providers, and non-profit employees in Oregon.*

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Thank you for the opportunity to do a quick overview of a bill that will help strengthen services that are offered through the Homecare Commission. As many of you know, SEIU Local 503 represents over 30,000 caregivers. We represent homecare and personal support workers, nursing home workers, and adult foster care providers. Our bill for 2018 focuses on training for homecare and personal support workers. These workers care for consumers that receive long term care services in their homes.

Oregon is a leader in long term care, we rank 4<sup>th</sup> overall in the AARP study of Long Term Services and Supports State Scorecard. But there are underlying rankings, such as our ranking 27<sup>th</sup> on quality of life and quality of care, that we need to improve on. We are hoping that through a proposed bill that will mandate training in 2018, can help us increase the quality of care and make sure workers know how to do their job.

For the past five years SEIU has been working on ways to make sure that consumers who receive services through the Homecare Commission are ensured quality care. We have also been working to make sure that homecare workers have the ability to provide that care.

We started to notice that Homecare Commission was not meeting some of its goals in supporting workers and consumers. The program has had to shift quickly because of changing federal regulations and bringing in the personal support workers that serve individuals with developmental disabilities into the Homecare Commission. Because of these shifts services and support for workers was impacted. Many of you may have heard from workers in the past about difficulties getting paid, accessing trainings, and getting timely background checks.

In 2015, we introduced a bill, SB 775 that directed the Homecare Commission to start to look at certifying and training homecare workers, reducing bureaucracy for these workers by having one universal provider number, and looked at how we can increase workforce development with these workers. That bill set up a report done by Thomas P Miller that was released this past spring that identified many next steps for the Commission. I included the report in my materials today.

It was after the Thomas P Miller report that we started working with stakeholders to bring forward a bill for the 2018 session. Over the years we have worked to find ways to increase worker training, through paying workers to go to training and giving an enhanced wage if they get certain training, but none have succeeded in making sure that a majority of homecare workers receive training. Less than 20% of workers today have received training. After the Thomas P Miller report and a new Secretary of State Audit that was released a couple of weeks ago, it is clear that to ensure that consumers receive quality services, workers need a minimum level of training.

While we started working on the bill this past summer, it sets the state up to address three of the recommendations in the recent Secretary of State Audit.

### **Recommendations 6-8 in Secretary of State Audit**

- In coordination with the Oregon Home Care Commission and SEIU, establish minimum homecare worker training requirements and develop refresher courses for topics covered in orientation.
- In coordination with the Oregon Home Care Commission and SEIU, implement a new model for managing the Homecare Worker program that lessens the workload of APD staff working in the CEP program.
- Establish a skills assessment for homecare workers to assure that they have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to provide consumer care.

We have been working with many different stakeholders, from AARP, Disabilities Rights Oregon, the Alzheimer's Association, the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities, Area Agencies on Aging, Department of Human Services, and the list goes on to develop this legislation. The goal of the bill is to set mandatory training and relieve some of the pressure put on case managers to provide training and answer questions by better onboarding homecare workers into their work with consumers. The bill will create the outline for the program and work with stakeholders and the agency to take the first step in making sure the program works for consumers and workers.

We are working with the agency to better understand what money currently is being used for training and how we can get better federal match for those dollars. We are also looking at what other states are doing to provide training and services, that we currently don't provide. We are working to have all of these questions answered before session begins.

We are a national leader in making sure that people have the ability to live with independence and dignity in their homes. We need to continue that work and also work to enhance the program to make sure it can meet the needs of the consumers who want to be able to live comfortably in their own homes.