



March 7, 2017

Testimony in Support of HB 2684

Submitted by Lili Hoag, Oregon CareWorks

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2684. Oregon CareWorks support this legislation to bring greater transparency in operation and higher quality care for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities living in group homes. We believe this legislation takes an important first step in addressing the disparities in transparency for state-funded institutions, better support and care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and improved working conditions for personal support workers.

Oregon CareWorks is a project of SEIU Local 503 and Family Forward Oregon aimed at starting a public conversation about the value of caregiving and what it means to be a part of the care economy, and creating real change in how our care systems work for Oregon's families. Our goals are to increase access to high-quality care by making it more affordable and accessible for parents of young children, seniors and people with disabilities, and to create family-wage caregiving jobs in the some of the fastest growing professions in Oregon. We believe that in order to value care work- the work that makes all other work possible- we need to raise wages for personal support workers and ensure transparency and accountability in group homes for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

We need to invest in care jobs – one of the fastest growing fields in the country – in order to create good, family-wage jobs right here in Oregon and improve the quality of care consumers receive. The average salary of a care worker is just \$20,000 per year¹. The turnover rate for caregivers working with adults with disabilities is 90%. By raising wages, we can create good jobs and improve the quality of life for the 2,891 people with disabilities living in care homes in Oregon, so that they are able to maintain quality and stable relationships with their caregivers.

Reforms to care facilities serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities could improve the lives of thousands of Oregonians. To improve this system, we must implement a mandatory wage pass-through in order to raise wages for caregivers, obtain transparency to ensure that public money is being spent properly, and enhance enforcement to protect our loved ones from mistreatment or abuse.

Caregiving jobs are some of the fastest growing professions, but low wages and few benefits keep them from being the kind of jobs that can support a family. Not only does this lower the quality of care our loved ones receive, but it's a missed opportunity to create good, family-wage jobs right here in Oregon. People who work hard and give so much of themselves to care for our loved ones should earn enough to provide a good quality of life for their own families.

¹ Dresser, Laura, Mary King and Raahi Reddy. "Oregon's Care Economy, The Case for Public Investment ". 2017.