

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen, members of the committee, my name is Kyndall Mason. I am a policy strategist for SEIU Local 503, and I am here today to testify in regards to Senate Bill 223. We agree with the end goal of the dash one amendment of SB 233, which we believe is to increase the training for homecare workers who serve consumers through the state, we don't believe SB 223 is the right way to go about that.

Homecare work is one of the fastest growing needs in our state, and our nation, as our population is aging rapidly and more people are relying on IDD services. We believe that the work around how we develop a training plan should be integrated into an overall workforce plan for how we create workforce ladders, how we recruit additional workers, and how we ensure workers have adequate training to meet the needs of consumers. This bill does not take into consideration the work already being done to build this strategic plan.

In 2015 the legislature passed SB 775, which created a task force tasked with putting together a strategic plan for home care workers, through the Oregon Home Care Commission. The Oregon Homecare Commission is currently in charge of homecare training and the registry that homecare workers use. Just this past December, the commission secured a consultant, specializing in developing strategic workforce development plans, Thomas P. Miller & Associates. They will be wrapping up their work by the end of May, and the Oregon Home Care Commission will ideally have the blueprint for building a robust workforce of home care workers who are well trained and prepared to provide a high quality of service.

At the same time the Oregon Secretary of State is conducting an audit of the home care workers who serve people through the Department of Aging and People with Disabilities. The audit is looking at whether or not the home care worker program is working effectively for consumers. And will, hopefully, result in a list of areas we can work to build out, or improve, our workforce development in a way that is most beneficial to consumers and workers alike.

SEIU has been working to increase training through each contract we've bargained. While we feel the current training options and structure do not adequately support the demand within the workforce, we think the current planning and analysis will create a roadmap for how to thoughtfully develop and professionalize the workforce. We owe it to consumers and workers to make these changes through a collaborative and thoughtful process.

While we support the general concept this bill is seeking, we feel like we'd better serve both consumers and workers by continuing the current work DHS and the Commission are doing to create a comprehensive plan. We hope to be back in the 2018 session with the next steps from the bill we worked on in 2015 and create a long term plan that includes enhanced training and a path to a workforce ladder.

Thank you for your time today.

Kyndall Mason

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