



Tuesday, March 28, 2017

RE: HB 5526

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner-Hayward and Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

My name is Karen Rutledge and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Shangri-La, a nonprofit human services organization supporting citizens with disabilities and disadvantages in the Willamette Valley and along Oregon's central coast.

Recent reports cite Oregon's rapid economic growth and change, resulting in strong recovery from our nation's economic downturn. With economic indicators, such as rental prices, home ownership, and new business development, 3 Oregon cities were in the top 5 across the United States boasting the greatest measure of growth and change: Bend, Salem, and Portland. While this may come as a source of encouragement, as it should, it also raises questions and concerns if this growth is providing positive benefits for all Oregonians.

There is a sector of our population employed to provide ongoing care and support to others in their daily lives. This includes support to people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and/or mental illness, some of whom receive services through Shangri-La. The workforce that supports others to live full and inclusive community lives continue to be economically challenged, with wages that do not keep up with inflation nor adjust to changes in Oregon's minimum wage. Funding contracts with state and local entities for these services do not have Cost of Living increases built into them, which requires ongoing legislative intervention.

Direct Support Professional (DSP) workers do far more than deliver attendant care. For instance, many are delegated by nurses to deliver medical care and perform work like a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). Despite doing similar work, their wage is far less than a CNA or other similar positions. This link demonstrates the wage disparity:

[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Direct\\_Support\\_Professional/Hourly\\_Rate](http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Direct_Support_Professional/Hourly_Rate)

We are asking for you to preserve funding that supports services for people with disabilities and provide a much needed and long overdue increase for the Direct Support Professional wage.

Sincerely,

Karen Rutledge  
CEO, Shangri-La

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