

March 28, 2017

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Human Services

Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, Members of the Committee

My name is Dorothy Coughlin. I live in Wilsonville. For the past 16 years, my sister Barbara has been served by the Direct Care staff of Partnerships in Community Living. Myself, I am recently retired after 36 years in the field of disability. My testimony speaks most specifically to the reality of Direct Care staff who provide critical services for pay that for years has not been commensurate with the complexity of care needs they address daily. My concern is not only on behalf of my sister, but for all of our Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are dependent on others for their care.

My sister is diagnosed in the profound range of intellectual disability. She lives with epilepsy, is mobility impaired, and requires 24 hour care. Barb also loves to sing, goes to work each day, has a great sense of humor, is the first to remind everyone to pray before we eat, loves to hold her baby nephews, makes beaded necklaces as gifts for others and has been and is my best teacher.

To care for Barb, staff need to administer 25 different medications each day, assist with bathing, toileting, dressing, prepare mechanically soft meals and monitor eating to prevent aspiration, assist with safe transfer from her wheelchair multiple times a day, take her for water therapy each week, plan and provide for community activities, attend multiple medical appointments, keep informed of Barb's 8 different protocols for crisis response, get her up twice each night to go to the restroom, write daily log reports, track seizures.....along with caring for 4 other housemates who too have multiple complex needs that with age, increase in complexity. Staff ratio is two staff caring for a community of 5 adults. Add to that, laundry, grocery shopping, house cleaning, meal preparation. With a pay scale of 10.50/hr maxing at \$15/hr it is not surprising the difficulty in finding and retaining staff, or staff having to work overtime to cover for vacancies. From a family perspective, in light of the complex needs and the necessity of trained, experienced staff, I am concerned about the safety of my sister and others with intellectual and developmental disabilities, especially those who have no family or caring person to advocate for them. The benefit of consistent relationships with care providers, the level of responsibility and need for competent, mature experienced employees demands that we address this need for a living wage to stabilize the DSP workforce. These are the very people who support Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities so that they can enjoy healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives in our communities.

They are dependent on us to advocate for the resources that will make this possible.

Thank you.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Dorothy Coughlin
Wilsonville, Oregon