

Good morning, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, committee members. My name is Jullia Cook.

I am testifying in front of you today for my brother and family.

I live in Redmond. I am a personal support worker with Deschutes County.

My brother was born developmentally disabled and diagnosed with autism at a young age. My brother cannot communicate his medical needs. He is far too trustworthy of strangers. He also needs constant reminders of his everyday affairs, including mealtimes.

He will never live on his own for these and many more reasons.

It's alright, though. I know his needs. I recognize when he is in pain. He really can't find the words to say it for himself. When he is sad, he comes to me. He also only trusts me when he is scared.

While my brother can't make his own decisions and act correspondingly about when he is hungry and other ordinary life events and common emotions that most of us in the room truly take for granted daily, our state and this legislative body face an important decision now between funding programs, that allow my brother to stay in the dignity of our home along with the living wages and benefits that allow me to provide that care, or permitting Oregon to continue to have one of the nation's lowest corporate tax rates.

We all make choices and live with related consequences every single day.

When I recently learned Comcast now owes all of us as taxpayers here in Oregon a \$147 million in back taxes, I was really astounded, especially given how many people with disabilities and care workers could be helped in the form of expanded services with that kind of money.

My story and that of my other brother, John, who is also a care provider and here today in this hearing room ~~with me~~, reminds us why it is so vital we as a state continue our great work in allowing people like my brother to remain in our home and stay out of costly facilities.

Let's continue to lead the whole nation in delivering home and community based care services.

I am so proud and fortunate to live in a state where my brother's rights are protected and care programs are available. Family members like me may give their loved ones the care needed to be healthier and happier. In my opinion, it is my brother's right to live exactly where he chooses and with whom he wishes. It is really ~~his~~ his choice for him to live at home with his sister — ~~that is me~~ — and to have the care necessary for him to live as independently as possible.

While the State of Oregon spends around \$2000 a month for a care provider like me to be there for my brother, it doesn't make good financial sense for the taxpayers to pay at least \$8,000 every month for him to be in a facility.

Proposed state budget cuts threaten my brother's independence and care. Personal support workers like me can sometimes go months without our earned pay. Deschutes County still owes me for my time back in December.

All care workers ~~including my brother and me~~ ^I are terrified and troubled about the legislature's

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proposed painful cuts to programs for seniors and people with disabilities.

As the number of people needing care increases, the number of case care managers should also expand in the state.

Because the Department of Human Services has been chronically underfunded for so long, I know many care providers like me have experienced paychecks arriving late and/or short the pay we should have received.

These ongoing cuts to my hours and much delayed pay have forced to me to now work with another consumer employer to make up for lost and unacceptable late wages. She is mentally disabled and needs more care hours than her service program guidelines will provide. These are services paid for by the Deschutes County Mental Health Department.

I waited four and a half months on the hiring process and am still waiting for pay vouchers from my work back in December of 2016.

I am sure many of you share in my outrage of working for free. I love my brother. I can't afford to always be a volunteer.

I am a professional care provider.

I cannot skip my bills or pretend that I'll be able to pay them next month or beyond, assuming I am correctly and punctually paid for my hours.

When my personal support worker hours were cut, I still cared for my brother. I still must pay my bills. My family still needs my earnings to pay for food and a place to live.

I am afraid there may come a day when my brother lives in a facility, with strangers taking care of him.

That doesn't have to happen: We can say yes to everyone and all companies paying their fair share—I have worked and paid taxes since I was a teenager.

Today, we can start by make corporations—like Comcast--pay their fair share in taxes, so that my family can receive and deliver the proper ^{ing} ~~the~~ right level of care in our own homes. We should not have the lowest corporate rate in the nation, with so many ~~the~~ ^{and} ~~people~~ needing care and increased public services.

Please make the right choice for care recipients and providers. Thank you for your time and consideration. I know and hope all of you will make the right decisions in the next few months about our state's budget and the right values and priorities associated with funding proven life-changing and cost-effective programs for those in need.

Jullia Cook
Redmond