

Hello Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield, members of the committee, good morning.

I'm John Cook. I live and work in Bend. My sister, Jullia, is also here today, testifying on behalf of our brother.

I care for other brother, Andrew.

I have cared for him for the last year.

Andrew is legally blind, deaf, and developmentally disabled.

He has multiple chronic health issues, requiring constant observation and care.

I help him manage his pain and diabetes.

His pain comes from injuries occurred in care facilities, a history of blood clotting from an auto accident, and a torn rotator cuff.

He also has an intermediate staph infection.

Frustratingly, it took the state of Oregon 2.5 months before they could actually start paying me for Andrew's care. I worked for free for those 2.5 months.

The Department of Human Services, because of years of budget cuts and the wrong choices our state makes every day about who and who doesn't pay for vital public services, including caring for our disabled brothers, originally expected my mother and I to share 125 hours a month for Andrew's care.

We had a home healthcare nurse assess his daily needs and outline my mom's daily care tasks.

The nurse requested more hours for his care from Andrew's case worker at Full Access in Bend.

During the meeting with Andrew's case worker we were finally able to get 196 hours approved for his care. I split those hours with my mother. I worked 156 hours and my mom did the other 40. These hours save the state money, as my brother would end up in an expensive facility if he were not cared for in the in home program.

We were only paid for these hours for 2 months until state budget cuts hit my family.

These budget cuts affect everyone in the system, including case managers.

Since the Department of Human Services does not have enough case managers to keep with the growth of its ever expanding and rapidly growing caseloads, many care providers don't receive the individual assistance we need as folks living at or near the poverty line in many cases.

Because of the stresses and unmanageable workloads associated with those state worker folks working with home care workers case and corresponding lack of raises and additional personnel resources deserving of these hard working front line workers at the Department of Human Resources, I have seen too many committed and talented state workers come and go.

Because Oregon does not ask corporations to pay their share, my family and I have and continue to see the care and health of our brothers and our own personal finances suffer.

If Oregon reformed its revenue system, my brother could have received more individualized help from case-workers, and I wouldn't not have gone without accessing my benefits so long.

It costs the state roughly six thousand dollars more a year to house a person in a care facility than it does to pay for a home care worker like me to provide the best possible hourly care.

My brother's care should not be limited and dictated because of the choices our state makes about whom pays their fair share.

Please don't continue to balance the state's budget on the backs of the care recipients and providers in my family. We are not looking to become rich. We simply want to have the financial compensation upon which to be able to provide the best possible care for our loved ones.

Thank you for time and attention allowing me to share my testimony. Good day to all.

John Cook