



March 30, 2017

Chair Reardon, Vice-Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Whisnant, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak on HB 2965, concerning a task force on workforce development for people with disabilities. My name is Kyndall Mason, I am a political & policy strategist for SEIU Local 503.

Early this year, Careworks, an organization focused on the enormity and significance of the care economy, released a report on the state of care in Oregon. The report details the increasing numbers of people who qualify for services and supports, while at the same time pointing out the crisis in the workforce itself. Not only is there a shortage of workers, but the fact that the work is often under appreciated and underpaid, means it's also hard to attract new people to the work.

As the legislature considers the value of a task force looking into workforce development, we'd like to ask that the work of the taskforce is done through the lens of current state of need for workforce development across the sector of people who work with people with disabilities.

SEIU represents more than 25,000 home care and personal support workers. Many of the consumers of home care services are people with physical disabilities, and it is the duty of the home care worker to make sure their clients are fully integrated into the community and living a life of independence, dignity and choice. This loosely translates to the fact that many home care workers often help facilitate the employment of their clients.

With this in mind, we'd like to simply ask that the focus of this task force, also include the need to invest in workforce development of home care and personal support workers so that the employment of people with disabilities is inclusive of the workers who make sure their transition into employment, and continued employment, is seamless.

We will need a robust and well trained workforce of home care and personal support workers to ensure that people with disabilities are not just gainfully employed but also successful in their chosen field of work and that they have the resources they need to continue to live independently.

Thank you for your time today.

Kyndall Mason
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