

June 28, 2017

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

My name is Joanne Fuhrman; I am the Co-founder and Co-Director of Partnerships in Community Living, Inc. (PCL). PCL is a Private Non-Profit Community Provider serving over 300 Children and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to live, love, work, and play in their communities.

I am testifying today on behalf of the Oregon Resource Association (ORA) and as a participant on the work group that led the development of HB 2684 and the – (dash) 3 amendments. I want to thank Reps. Piluso and Hack and Sen. Gelser for their participation and commitment to the workgroup and Rep. Keny-Guyer for convening it.

Our interest, and my personal interest in serving on this work group, was to find consensus on policy considerations and most importantly, to advocate for a fair and competitive wage for the approximately 14,000 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) that work for community providers serving children and adults with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). As you know, our DSPs provide supports for people with I/DD to live and work in a safe and healthy manner as members of their communities. A stable and qualified workforce is a critical element of care for those who need their assistance to live a full, inclusive life. However, poverty wages are forcing many to choose jobs with higher pay to support themselves and their families. This results in unacceptably high turnover and puts those in service at risk.

We thank you for the commitment to raising these wages and acknowledge the increase reflected in yesterday's I/DD budget that represents a major commitment in a difficult budget year. We are so grateful for this first step in providing fair and competitive wages for this vitally important workforce. Again, I offer you my sincere and heartfelt gratitude.... Thank you.

The primary participants of the work group were ORA, Community Provider Association of Oregon (CPAO) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Together, we represent Oregon's mission driven providers and our dedicated employees as well as SEIU and their dedicated DSP members. We met for over six weeks to negotiate the final provisions before you. The -3 amendment to HB 2684 represents our ongoing, collective commitment to quality services for people who live in comprehensive residential services (24-hour Residential and Supported Living) as well as fair and competitive wages and excellent working conditions for DSPs across Oregon.

The final agreed-to provisions include:

- Supporting higher DSP wages to reduce turnover and provide a stable quality workforce;
- An increase in annual licensing fees which will be dedicated to online accredited training for DSPs that provide opportunities for certification leading to career and wage advancement for our DSPs;
- Maintaining our long term commitment to transparency and accountability, we agreed to additional requirements for these things; and
- A commitment to continue these discussions into the interim to review the protective service system, including abuse findings, fines, and resulting consequences. Ultimately, we all agreed that what is most important is that people with I/DD are safe and protected and our system is designed to assure this.

We believe the final product reflects an important investment in our DSPs and our State provider partners and will enhance current transparency reporting practices.

With sincere respect and gratitude,

Joanne Fuhrman, SPHR
Co-Director, Partnerships in Community Living, Inc.
Legislative Committee Chair and Board Member, ORA