



February 14, 2017

Good morning Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services. My name is Emily Sokolski, I am a Senior Researcher for the Service Employees International Union Local 503. I appreciate the opportunity to share SEIU 503's perspective on Senate Bill 238 and our support for raising wages for Direct Support Professionals.

It is clear that the low wages offered to DSPs have made it difficult to attract new workers. Likewise, low wages contribute to an estimated 90% turnover among DSPs in the group home sector. The training costs associated with turnover and the high costs resulting from overtime dependence, are clearly expensive. Consistent with 503's mission to improve wages and working conditions for direct care workers, our union supported HB 5206 package 111, which passed in the 2015 session.

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HB 5206 Package 111 was intended to increase the DSP wage 4% from the modeled wage of \$10.80 to \$11.23. I call this a "wage model" because it does not correlate to what DSPs are actually paid but is used to develop a Medicaid reimbursement rate paid to group home providers. In addition, both DHS and the providers believed the wage model was \$10.80 when the 4% increase passed, however the model was actually predicated on DSP wages of \$12.94. The 4% increase, then, should have led to an average wage of \$13.45.

503's research department reviewed starting wages posted on Craigslist and provider websites for 33 group home providers between September 12 and September 23, 2016. Of the job postings reviewed, 14 providers

advertised a starting wage below the \$10.80 model and all were below the model wage of \$12.94. A table summarizing our research is included in our written testimony.

This is why 503 is advocating for a direct wage pass which will require a minimum, not an average, wage of \$15 an hour. We understand that providers were asked to report to ODDS by September 30, 2016 on how the rate increase was implemented. Though we have not seen a summary of those reports, ODDS has stated that all of the providers passed the increase along to DSPs. We believe there must be a reporting mechanism that ensures providers are in compliance with whichever wage model is adopted. Financial transparency will also help advocacy groups, ODDS, and the Legislature understand what, beyond the cost of labor, is driving operating costs for group home providers.

While 503 supports increasing wages for DSPs, we believe that a number of reforms are needed to protect the autonomy and rights of individuals receiving supports and services in these settings. These reforms include requiring that case managers explicitly inform individuals that independent living is an option when receiving state funded services; raising penalties for abuse to match the fines levied in other long-term care settings and enhancing protections for mandatory reporters; requiring annual inspections of group home facilities; and requiring providers to staff according to an individual's support plan, rather than minimum staffing ratios defined in statute. We hope that these elements will lead to comprehensive reforms in the group home sector, provide more opportunities for independent living, and ensure that both the individuals working in this sector and receiving support in this sector are treated with dignity and respect.

Advertised Starting Wages for DSPs, 9/12/2016-9/23/2016			
Provider	Posted Rate	+/- \$10.80	+/- \$12.94
ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS	\$10.45	(\$0.35)	(\$2.49)
ALBERTINA KERR CENTERS	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
ALTERNATIVE SVCS-OREGON, INC	\$11.30	\$0.50	(\$1.64)
ALVORD-TAYLOR, INC	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES	\$10.25	(\$0.55)	(\$2.69)
BRIGHTSIDE	\$10.25	(\$0.55)	(\$2.69)
COAST REHAB SERVICES (coastal & metro)	\$10.60	(\$0.20)	(\$2.34)
COMMUNITY ACCESS SERVICES II, INC	\$11.25	\$0.45	(\$1.69)
COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC	\$11.38	\$0.58	(\$1.56)
DUNGARVIN OREGON, LLC	\$11.04	\$0.24	(\$1.90)
EDWARDS CENTER, INC	\$11.40	\$0.60	(\$1.54)
EN AVANT, INC	\$9.50	(\$1.30)	(\$3.44)
HOOD RIVER SHELTERED WORKSHOP	\$12.40	\$1.60	(\$0.54)
LIVING OPPORTUNITIES, INC	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
MENTOR	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
MID-VALLEY REHABILITATION	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
NATIONAL MENTOR SERVICES, LLC	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
OPPORTUNITY FOUNDATION OF CENTRAL OREGON	\$10.50	(\$0.30)	(\$2.44)
OREGON MENNONITE RES SVCS	\$12.00	\$1.20	(\$0.94)
OREGON SUPPORTED LIVING PROGRAM	\$11.85	\$1.05	(\$1.09)
PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY LIVING, INC	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
PATHWAY ENTERPRISES, INC	\$12.00	\$1.20	(\$0.94)
PEARL BUCK CENTER, INC	\$10.50	(\$0.30)	(\$2.44)
RAINBOW ADULT LIVING	\$10.80		(\$2.14)
RENEW CONSULTING, INC	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
RISE, INC	\$12.00	\$1.20	(\$0.94)
RON WILSON CENTER	\$10.00	(\$0.80)	(\$2.94)
SHANGRI-LA CORP	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)
SOUTHERN OREGON ASPIRE	\$9.80	(\$1.00/\$.50)	(\$3.14)
STAR OF HOPE ACTIVITY CENTER, INC	\$10.25	(\$0.55)	(\$2.69)
UNITED CEREBRAL PALSY OF OR & SW WASH, INC	\$11.53	\$0.73	(\$1.41)
WORK UNLIMITED, INC	\$11.00	\$0.20	(\$1.94)