

February 6, 2018

To: Senate Committee on Workforce  
From: Katie Rose, Oregon Support Services Association

Re: Support for SB 1534, Requiring Department of Human Services to establish minimum training standards for home care workers and personal support workers and to provide training

Chair Taylor and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 1534, which would require DHS to establish and provide training for Personal Support Workers. Oregon Support Services Association (OSSA) is comprised of the 14 Support Service Brokerages across Oregon. We serve around 8,000 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in their own or family homes, in every community throughout the state.

Brokerages have connected people to services in their homes and communities for nearly 18 years. When we began in 2001, we were supporting people with developmental disabilities to hire individuals who were already in their lives to be "Domestic Employees," creating support relationships within their existing social framework. That has shifted over the years, as the system has grown exponentially to cover the 5,000 who were waiting for services and beyond, and the Oregon Home Care Commission has worked to expand the workforce by recruiting Personal Support Workers to make this a career.

With this growth has come system change, but the structural pieces have not all been put into place to assure success. One major missing component is a baseline training curriculum for all Personal Support Workers. As agencies founded on the principles of self-determination, we would like to see training for Personal Support Workers to foster independence, and increase ability to direct and realize a rich, full life for all people.

When combined with other structural pillars such as strong employer supports for people with disabilities, the training program will create solid ground on which to build the future of community-based services. Trained workers result in increased safety for people with developmental disabilities, and better lives for Oregonians.