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AARP Oregon Testimony on Homecare Workforce Development – SB 1534A

February 26th, 2018

TO: House Committee on Business and Labor, Rep. Holvey Chair

FROM: Jon Bartholomew, Government Relations Director, AARP Oregon

AARP Oregon supports SB 1534A because it will lead to a higher level of competency and professionalism for homecare workers in Oregon.

One of the key elements of the term “homecare worker” is the word “home”. The vast majority of people who need long term supports and services prefer to stay at home for as long as they can. Home is security, home is community, home is family. Homecare workers help people stay in their own homes, and with improved training that this bill sets in motion, we expect people will be able to stay at home longer.

This doesn’t just affect the individual receiving care. A great number of people served by homecare workers also have a family caregiver or two or three that is providing care when the homecare worker isn’t around. There are about 470,000 family caregivers in Oregon, who provide over \$5.7 billion per year of uncompensated care. The stress of family caregiving is proven to be an emotional, physical, and financial burden on those family caregivers. These caregivers end up having higher healthcare costs of over \$100 million per year in Oregon just due to caregiving.

Homecare workers often provide a much needed respite for family caregivers. In 2016, AARP coordinated a family caregiver respite work group that visited 17 communities in Oregon to get input on how to improve access to and use of respite in Oregon. We found that in many communities, there is a shortage of quality homecare workers – not always a shortage of homecare workers, but a shortage of QUALITY ones.

One of the recommendations of the Oregon Caregiver Respite Work Group report, that the legislature endorsed last year by passing HJM 4, was to improve the quality and quantity of homecare workers who can provide respite services. That’s exactly what SB 1534A aims to do, which is why AARP Oregon supports it.

