

Erik Leggett

Chairs Gelser, Vice Chair Heard members of the committee,

My name is Erik Leggett, I live in Keizer, Oregon and I was a private agency caregiver for 2 years.

I support Senate Bill 669 and the need for better training for private agency caregivers.

Like many others, I began by career as a caregiver without any experience. Although I received some training on care tasks such as skin care and how to administer bed baths I was never trained or prepared to provide the specialized care some of my clients needed.

One such case involved the need for another caregiver and I to perform an occupied bed change for a hospice patient. To be frank, we did not know what we were doing nor did we consider that how we went about performing that task might put us at risk of physical injury, but more importantly we did not know that we could severely hurt the patient by moving them. What we attempted to do was to stand the patient up while we changed the bed. I want to again stress, this was a person in hospice.

In hindsight, I do not know what we were thinking nor did I consider that what we were doing was wrong. Fortunately, the client care coordinator happened to make a site visit that day and because of her background in medical care intervened.

There are other examples of practices or lack thereof of how private agencies jeopardize client well-being for expediency." Just send someone... anyone available" is what they'd say. It didn't matter if the client was a woman who felt extremely uncomfortable having her very personal care needs performed by a man or if female caregivers were repeatedly assigned to care for a male client with a documented history of groping female caregivers. No serious consideration was given to matching caregivers with clients.

I became a caregiver because I needed the work but soon realized that caregiving is more than a job. It is a calling. Caregivers are often the only human contact a person who can no longer care for themselves has. The agencies that we entrust to care for them need to be held to higher standards of care with vigorous oversight and enforcement mechanisms.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 669.

Thank you.