

## Nichole Harden

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of Oregon's private agency caregivers and the clients we serve. My name is Nichole Harden. I am a 30 year old mother from Eugene and I've been working for private in-home care agencies for a year. Growing up, I was fortunate enough to be very close to all of my great-grandparents. I experienced first-hand how the role of in-home caregivers was *crucial* in providing dignity and stability to my whole family towards the end of my great-grandparents' lives. After my family hired private agency caregivers in Bend a few years back and I saw how meaningful their jobs were, I definitely knew it would be something to consider for myself. Now, after working for two different private agencies and seeing what happens behind the scenes, I would be hesitant to choose a private agency to assist my family in the future.

I started working with a privately owned homecare agency in Eugene last spring and was assigned two clients. Training was minimal, introductions were awkward and abrupt and I was more or less thrown into two completely different situations with my clients with six hours of training. I sat in a conference room and watched outdated videos that were probably 20 years old and quite basic. There were a couple of demonstrations about proper lifting techniques and we signed paperwork saying we wouldn't disclose company secrets, steal clients or have relations with our clients outside of work hours.

I was a server in restaurants for ten years before I became a caregiver. My training in restaurants was extensive: a 20 hour week of book work followed by another 20 hour week of shadowing an experienced server before I was ever allowed to serve a party on my own. Six hours of watching old videos to prepare me to have a stranger's life in my hands and all the liability that comes with that, seems irresponsible and neglectful. I was given far more training to serve people spaghetti!

After working for six months, caregivers received an email that the company would be shutting its doors. The office claimed that they had notified clients, although this was not true, as multiple caregivers returned to the last two days of their jobs only to have to break the news to their clients, who were sad and anxious about what would happen next. One of my clients with severe dementia, who was unable to care for herself, was called by the office. The office informed her instead of her son, who oversaw her care plan. She was sad, confused and quite frankly really didn't understand the situation. Although I was unable to see her again, I heard through a coworker that she was traumatized for weeks. .

My other client who is perfectly capable of handling her personal decisions, care and finances, was not informed of the closure. When we called the office, they insisted they had notified her, but this seems unlikely, as she was very organized and kept an eye on her email, mail and phone messages. It was a catastrophe for the caregivers and even more so for the elderly community we care for. Prior to this, there were signs that the company was in financial trouble in the form of bounced payroll checks and other complications.

This disaster could and should have been avoided through greater transparency and oversight but there was no one watching.

I quickly joined another private homecare agency in Eugene and was appalled that the training was almost identical to the training I had received at the other company. I literally watched the same videos I mentioned previously. Bottom line: The training private homecare agencies provide is grossly inadequate and without greater oversight, our grandparents, great-parents and other members of the elderly community are at risk. Please support SB 669.

Thank you again for your time.