

John Griffiths testimony for SB 493
Senate Committee on Human Services
Presented on February 12,2019

To the Senate Committee on Human Services:

I tried to give testimony on Tuesday but I gave testimony that only reinforced my reading difficulties. I would now like to give testimony that will hopefully convince you of the need to give this bill some authority. Preferably, the authority of the pink slip. The reason why I advocate so strongly for the authority to fire, and I'm not suggesting you put it in the hands of one person, but a group, is because of what I see, hear and experience in my own community.

There is a power differential that needs to be addressed. There needs to be a place of protection of peers. The outcome of a claim should be decided by a group of clients. These clients will need to have the ability of understanding that people's lives are at stake, both caregiver and client. I want a system that will protect good caregivers and punish bad caregivers.

We need a system that has people you can go to tell your complaint. There is fear that can be put into clients by a caregiver, especially in a group home setting. It is a fear of being abused and not being able to fight back. It is utterly difficult to make a complaint to a system that isn't working and is very unfriendly and sometimes hostile to people who are having difficulty navigating through the world and the system.

Even if you are a client that can advocate well for yourself, the system is still very unfriendly as caregivers will back each other up and the union will back them up. Even the Adult Protective Services of Multnomah County is on the side of caregivers which makes it impossible for clients to get a fair investigation into their abuse complaints.

My words here today are a warning. It is not going to get any better. It is only going to get worse. Please do something about it before somebody is badly hurt. Give the Human Rights Commission some teeth and claws.

I know it easy enough to give a warning, but if you had experience in the abuse reporting system, you would know exactly what I am talking about.

Give the Human Rights Commission the authority to fire.