

March 10, 2021

Dear Chair Williams and Members of the Committee,

My name is Anna Keenan-Mudrick. I'm the Executive Director of Community Access Services (CAS), a nonprofit serving Oregonians who experience Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in Columbia, Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah counties. We are members of ORA and I am the Legislative Chair for the Community Providers Association of Oregon.

I urge you to support HB 2964.

Our current funding level puts at risk the health and safety of those we support, and perpetuates the nationwide, inequitable tradition of grossly underpaying the Women and Persons of Color, who represent a far greater percentage of our Direct Support Professional (DSP) workforce than exists in the general population.

In Oregon, 2019 Census Bureau figures indicate that 27% of our residents are Persons of Color, and 50% are female. At CAS, 45% of our employees are Persons of Color, and 77% are female. Although Oregon's Pay Equity laws require parity based on comparable work and position, it does not address the historical, systemic devaluation of our employees, perpetuated by the design of federal and state Long Term Services (LTSS) funding structures.

Then add to this, the disproportionality of COVID specific economic impacts on Women, Persons of Color, and individuals with disabilities. This pandemic has exacerbated historical inequities of both our workforce and those we support in our Intellectual and Developmental Disability focused missions.

The great news is that we have a vehicle in HB 2964 that will effectively address this issue, head on. Oregon is already a leader in the fight for fair wages. Oregon values its critical, historically marginalized workforce. Oregon values the health, safety and welfare of its citizens who experience IDD. And Oregon CAN do better by establishing a 150% of minimum wage professional pay average for the incredible women, minorities, and others economically oppressed who fulfill their vital, high-demand, skilled Direct Support Professional roles.

HB 2964 provides a concrete way to advance the priorities outlined in Governor Brown's State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery. On page one it reads: "as we respond to this crisis and plan for recovery, we have an unprecedented opportunity and moral obligation to address the many structural barriers that disproportionately impact Oregon's communities of color and families navigating poverty." HB 2964 absolutely aligns with, and provides a concrete way to achieve the systemic change Governor Kate Brown calls for in this plan of action.

It is the right thing to do for our committed, skilled, diverse workforce. And it protects Oregonians with IDD. Thank you so much for your time, your leadership, and your support of this critical legislation.

Most Sincerely,

Anna Keenan-Mudrick, MSW
Executive Director of Community Access Services
Legislative Chair of Community Providers Association of Oregon