

Co-Chairs Lieber and Nosse, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Jolynn Best, and I am a second-generation Adult Foster Home provider. My father opened the two Adult Foster Homes (AFHs) that my husband and I operate in 1985 / 1986. Through these homes, my family and I have provided care to generations of seniors on the Southern Oregon Coast.

For nearly 30 years, my father was able to pay his caregivers more than \$2.00 per hour than the State paid in-home caregivers. Since the well-deserved pay raise for in-home caregivers a couple of years ago, we have found ourselves in direct competition with the State. While we would love to be able to pay at least what the State is paying for in-home caregivers, given what the State pays for care, we cannot. This lower hourly pay rate coupled with the stress of the pandemic, the increased pressure on caregivers and their families, and the currently attractive unemployment benefits, we have been unable to find or keep caregivers. In recent months, we have been down as much as half of our staff, which has left me working up to the equivalent of 2 (full-time) and 1 (3/4-time) caregiver shifts providing hands-on care to our residents. To say nothing of the additional time it takes to manage our business, this is not sustainable.

We have advertised for staff consistently since September 2020. Many interviews have ended with the prospective caregiver cutting the interview short when I tell them how much we can pay per hour. Without a substantial increase in funding for Adult Foster Homes, at least matching DHS-driven market rates for caregivers, Providers like my husband and me, will never be able to compete for qualified caregivers.

Adult Foster Homes are a critical link in the care chain the State's Department of Human Services has excelled at providing for its seniors and people with disabilities. We have lost more than half of the Adult Foster Homes in Coos & Curry counties in the past six years. Without adequate funding and support, we cannot continue to provide this critical service to our community.